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MARY HEATON
VORSE

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Suddenly she put her face up to his and kissed him

I'VE COME TO STAY

A LOVE COMEDY
OF BOHEMIA

BY
MARY HEATON VORSE



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THE CENTURY CO.
1918

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GRAHAM 16F 37



I'VE COME TO STAY

DOWN below Washington Arch, at the end of the Avenue, lies Washington Square. It is bounded on the north by a sparse fringe of fashionables who live in mellow brick houses. It takes only a minute to walk from the north to the south, but whether you pass the hotels—west, or choose the way past the Benedict—east, you have left New York and gone into that mythical spot called Greenwich Village.

If I were asked by a dweller in one of these amiable pink abodes north what road to take to what its friends affectionately call "The Village," I would be at a loss to point it out. Under scientific scrutiny, it is an indefinite area below Fourteenth

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Street, winding around a variety of irregular streets. It comprises some studio buildings, a few eating places, a club or two, and that is all one can say of its geographical confines. It is nothing much to look at; yet it has already passed into tradition.

The Square is the heart of the Village. It has as many moods as there are days in the year, and sometimes as many as there are hours in the day. In spring, it looks like a green flag of a strange pattern, and on moonlight nights, it has mysterious, silver hours. The people who live about it are as diversified in character as the moods of the Square. One group of people melts gradually into another group or is superimposed on it until one has that intangible thing called atmosphere—poor, abused word—if you would invent another, I would never use you again—it is for that reason that it has been the most written

of spot in America since the passing of the Barbary Coast.

There are living there Regular People, who look and act like you and me, who have incomes and children and school bills. Then there are Wassailers, and Uplifters, Psychoanalysts, and Professional Disapprovers. There are the inhabitants of Sinister Street. There are young people in love with Whim, and worshiping at the altar of Caprice. I do not speak of idealists and sensualists, because one finds them in all villages. There are also the Aborigines who do not know that they live in the Village or that anything is going on.

These groups are interchangeable. You may find an Uplifter or a Regular Person turn into a Wassailer, and a Wassailer become a Professional Disapprover, at a moment's notice—for the people in the Village are not patterned on an unalterable pattern, like the animals in Noah's Ark.

Like other villages, every one knows every one's else business—unlike other villages, nobody cares, except the Professional Disapprovers, who hate being found out as much as people anywhere.

Innocent tea-shops, kept by nice young girls, jostle saloons frequented by crooks and dips, and in either place, you may find blooming there flowers of the spirit, kindness and understanding—and it is probable that in both places Wassail of one sort or another is in progress, for near the Square one may have the comforting assurance that one may always have a party if one wants one.

As to the virtue of the Village, there are as many Professional Disapprovers as there are Wassailers, and who shall say the Disapprovers are the most virtuous? According to Freud, indeed, they are not.

Few of the Villagers come from New York City. They come from staid New

England homes and from refined regions like Beloit. There are few people there whose fathers were not ministers, or at the very least, deacons. The children of the righteous inhabit it. Here are those who lived through meager youths. They come here to escape the cramping memories of a childhood. But the past is hard to undo; obligation still dogs their steps, old puritanical desires whisper in their hearts. Fanaticism in a new form springs out of ambush at them, as I will presently show in the story of Camilla of the Blue Serge Past.

CHAPTER I

AMBROSE INGRAHAM sat by his window overlooking Washington Square. This pleasant and ornamental young man was not an artist, although he lived in an uncomfortable but picturesque attic which was lighted by a skylight, which he called a studio.

He heard a little scratching on the window and looked up to see Yolande, his cat. This cat was a redoubtable warrior with a black soul. It was a forbidding creature scarred with the marks of a thousand battles prone to nocturnal wanderings. It had come one fine day and adopted Ambrose and since then had kept his attic, as Ambrose himself said, cleared of all other forms of animal life. It was not a pleasant

cat; it was a beast both ribald and austere; ribald in its private life and austere in its manners. In moments of levity Ambrose explained that this cat was his conscience and that he had externalized it so that it might worry him the less. There were friends of Ambrose who told him frankly that they for their part preferred a still small voice than a gloomy, gray animal sitting there forever reminding one that one had refrained from honest toil for the past week. Ambrose, however, had had a collar manufactured for the cat, set with stones of imitation jade, so that every one on beholding it might realize that this cat was a private cat.

The collar had cost him \$4.50 and he had not yet paid for it.

Though not a painter, Ambrose followed the arts. He wrote short stories for a living when inclined, and what was more, he sold them. So he lived in penury with the

imaginative feeling that he had wealth always within reach. He felt he had but to take a pen in hand to become temporarily affluent. But being in love with life he seldom found time for work. This was not strange, for Ambrose touched life on many sides. He was one of those of a group of dwellers on Washington Square who liked to fancy themselves as being near Greenwich Village and yet not of it.

He was a tall young man with a whimsical, candid face and agreeable manners and he wore beautiful clothes—none of your slouching Washington Square ways for him. Although he lived within sight of the Arch, Ambrose frequently dined uptown with respectable and sometimes fashionable people. He didn't brag about it and his humbler friends felt rather proud of him when all was said and done; and when he was broke, which was often, cheerfully loaned him money for white gloves

and enormous laundry bills. By all of which you will observe that Ambrose was one of those young people who perpetuate history by living close to the heart of tradition.

The time I have occupied in explaining the circumstances of Ambrose Ingraham he had spent in contemplating his cat Yolande. This cat's name any one could see with half an eye should be Sullivan, but Ambrose was one of those proud and deluded spirits who imagine that in paradox the soul transcends convention. He explained that his soul required a cat named Yolande. This evil-visaged animal now stared at him sourly.

"Yolande," Ambrose chided, "you have come back to me in all sorts of conditions. You have come back battered and blind, but you have never come back wearing a mari-gold in your expensive collar." Yolande shook himself, evidently with the purpose

of getting rid of the offensive flower. Underneath the marigold a small white note was tied.

"Do you think it appropriate," Ambrose inquired, speaking in that humorous jargon that serves for dialect in the Square, "for one of your size and weight to act like a carrier pigeon? Do you think a grouch like you has any right to come into a decent young man's room bringing flowers and missives? I have never scolded you, Yolande, for your own natural vices, but let me warn you against these exotic ways." Upon this Ambrose detached the note from the collar of the animal.

It read briefly, "Look out of the window toward the right."

"Why any one," thought Ambrose, "should go chasing around for adventure I don't understand, when one's own cat can bring it to him walking off the roof."

In the house next to Ambrose's was another studio. It had a similar mansard window. Leaning out from this mansard was a very young woman. Had her nose not been slightly tilted upward her little features would have had almost a classic regularity. She had a lovely smiling mouth and the complexion which should accompany red hair and so seldom does.

The most remarkable thing about her was the hair itself. It was red and done with the cunning of elaboration into a marvelous and fantastic headdress so extraordinary that it became a costume in itself. It was a headdress of the utmost frivolity, a headdress full of humor, gaiety and audacity. It made one think of the convolutions of some magnificent and fantastic cake. It had a hint of the Taj Mahal, but most of all it was entirely and inimitably becoming.

As for the rest of her costume, as much

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of it as Ambrose could see, it was white and virginal, of almost nun-like plainness.

The young woman now inquired of Ambrose, "How do you like my hair?"

"It's adorable," Ambrose responded. "I've always wanted to see a headdress like that. I know now why I have always felt a haunting and divine dissatisfaction with life."

The young woman now began a cautious retreat.

"Where are you going?" asked Ambrose.

"Going to draw this headdress—I draw for a living," she responded. "I just designed it. I had to know what it was like. Good-by."

"Don't go," cried Ambrose. "I beg of you, don't go."

Cautiously the young woman leaned forward.

"This is a very busy day for me," she

responded. "It isn't often I invent a headdress like this. The Divine Fire doesn't come all the time. I must go. Thank you for your opinion."

"Don't go," cried Ambrose. "I beseech you, don't go. I have something of extreme importance to say to you."

"If it doesn't take long," the young woman temporized.

"O no," said Ambrose. "It's only that I love you, and I want to know when I can see you again."

She smiled at him the smile of an angel who knows how bad it is and rejoices in its badness.

"That," she replied, "we must leave to fate." She retreated slowly but inevitably, definitely.

"Please tell me," Ambrose bawled. "I beg of you tell me."

"I have no time," she called. "The Divine Fire drives, good-by!"

She stuck her head out once more and this time grinned no longer like an angel, but the grin of a lovely guttersnipe; for all the decorousness of the grin she might as well have put her thumb to her nose.

Down to the left resounded laughter. Their heads craned far over the window, he observed his friends, Mary Dean and the rough-necked roommates, Moriarity and Siddell.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" they laughed in derision.

"Stung!" cried Moriarity.

It was then that Ambrose realized that the conversation had been of necessity conducted in shouts rather than in the whispered tones appropriate for the words which they had spoken.

"Turtles!" he flung at them. "You at least should know better, Mary Dean!"

"Haw! Haw!" they laughed.

"The goblins will get you!" cried Mary.

Ambrose retreated with what dignity he could into his room. He reflected, not without complacency, that he was not dining in this vulgar neighborhood. In fact, he was invited to a dinner at the Pomfrets who resided politely near Central Park East, and also that God was good and that the day was fine and that he could ride up in the economical Fifth Avenue bus. He occupied the time between then and dinner in writing a little free verse addressed to Mary Dean upon the Inadvisability of the Absence of Manners in Youth. Then dressed beautifully, looking indeed as though his abode was luxury's lap, Ambrose started elegantly forth for dinner, thanking God that he was not as others in the Square.

CHAPTER II

STANDING in the drawing room near his hostess there was a young woman whose hair was parted smoothly in the middle and done as plainly as that of the Madonna. Her dress was plain, but of an artful plainness. It was a dress which conformed apparently to all that conventional fashion demanded and yet that was audacious; its demureness was treacherous. Yet by what subtle method this dress had transcended its own simplicity which put it in the class of garments which we call "creations" taxed Ambrose's ingenuity.

These thoughts, however, occurred to him later. The fact which almost robbed him of his usual tranquillity was that the lady in the artful frock and Madonna head-dress was his next-door neighbor.

He heard Clara Pomfret murmuring his name and the name of Miss Deerfield.

"Camilla dear," she continued, "this is your neighbor of whom I told you. I thought, Ambrose, that you and Camilla should really meet each other, living as both of you do on Washington Square. I thought it would be fun to have a South Washington Square dinner, and then you can tell us all about it and why it is always in the papers."

Ambrose turned to Camilla. "You knew all the time you were going to meet me to-night," he accused. "You recognized my cat."

"I recognized nothing.

I shot a cat into the air,
It fell to earth, I know not where.

I saw that the cat belonged to some one and I had to have judgment on my head-dress. I had to see it reflected in the eyes of another."

"I have heard of you before," said Ambrose moodily.

"Oh, have you so!" responded Camilla. "What have you heard?"

"I have heard they have had to have an extra rubbish cart in the Village to shovel up the hearts you have broken," Ambrose responded, "but my broken heart you shall not get. I shall keep it under a glass case in my room as a warning not to look out of the window. If you have read the Bible—and by your appearance I have no doubt you have—you will remember that looking out of the window was always unfortunate and frequently ungodly."

"How do you know I read the Bible?" asked Camilla.

Ambrose spoke patronizingly. "My poor young lady, one has but to look at you to see that you come of honest and respectable parents. No one but in a musical comedy would have ideas in dress

and hairdressing that you have, had they not passed through a meager, godly youth."

Camilla flashed a smile at him. "It 's true," she replied; "it 's absolutely true."

"I seem clairvoyant to you," Ambrose continued. "I am not. I, too, when young, lived in a place where respectability stalked unchecked."

They were seated at the table.

"Camilla," asked Clara Pomfret, "why do you live in what is called Greenwich Village? What do you like about it? Why don't you respectably live in Gramercy Park? No one ever writes a pleasant word about it. I can't say much about it myself. I went down and ate dinner, and not a good one, in a crowded, smoky place where the chairs were painted purple with green spots, and that is all there is to it."

"You went slumming," Camilla accused. "I don't see why people like you can't let

us alone. Mary Dean is going to have a cake shop—there is an awful need for cream puffs and whipped cream in the Village—she is going to have up a sign, ‘No Slumming Allowed.’ I advise her to have an African bouncer who will rush people like you, Clara, right out of the door. There,” she said, turning to the young man at her left, “that’s why I like the Square. If you want to have a cream-puff shop with an African bouncer, you can.”

“Yes,” said Ambrose bitterly, “you can do anything you like down there. You can disturb the peace of young men by capturing innocent cats and sending them home with marigolds in their collars. It’s a horrid place. Everybody talks too much and I feel that all that is needed to give it a *coup de grace* is a cream-puff shop, no doubt in a cellar, painted coral and black, with an African bouncer dressed like a

monkey in peacock green and a Gibraltar scarf around his waist."

"Why do you live there if you don't like it?" Clara Pomfret asked.

"Where else is there to live," Ambrose inquired, "in this town?"

Like other Square dwellers, Ambrose passed his days running down the Village, but he did n't like to hear uptowners do it. "It 's a place like any other—lots of young people and others not so young, having fun working and playing. I can't bear it, but I can't bear New York."

"I love it," said Camilla. "It 's funny and it 's kind. People are really good to each other. It is the road of escape for so many imprisoned spirits. Look at me. I had a horrible blue-serge youth, and my heart was kept in a gray flannel bag and hung in the attic. Yet I dreamed clothes. One day I met some artists and studied a

while and then I found the whimsical fancies of my brain were salable. Did you ever see a large, green, beautiful balloon before it was blown up—what it looks like? That is what my soul used to be. I'll tell you what we are—we are the flaming shadows cast by unfulfilled joys which died unborn in our parents' souls! That's why we go too far sometimes—because we come of people who never even started going anywhere. That's why we amuse ourselves so hard. If some of us must kill ourselves by it, it's because we have lived in places where people died for want of any amusement. We come of people who lived in the ordinary hypocrisies so long that some of us cast away even the decencies in our endeavor not to be hypocritical. Here's to it." She held up a glass.

"Here's to the great hot air factory of America," said Ambrose.

“Why are you there when you can’t bear it?” Camilla asked in a low tone.

“Until today I have been leaving tomorrow for two years,” Ambrose responded.

CHAPTER III

CAMILLA dressed in spectacular furs, with a hat as conspicuous as the headlight of an engine, was hastening along South Washington Square going east. She was run into by a young man hastening along South Washington Square going west.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "It 's so awfully stupid of me. I don't see how I could have done it. I don't see how I could have avoided seeing you looking as you do, like a musical comedy poster of a young business woman returning from work."

"What 's that," Camilla inquired, "you have in your hand?" It was a very large wooden mallet.

"That 's the reason I did n't see you,"

Ambrose replied. "Concentration. I was thinking about you so hard. I was just going home to call you up."

"You can't," replied Camilla. "Don't you know that I 'm rich enough not to afford a telephone?"

"I know it very well," Ambrose replied. "That 's just why I 've acquired this wireless apparatus. I was just about to go to my room and pound violently upon my wall and then go and look out my window, and then when you put your head out of yours, I was going to tell you that it was up to you to save my life."

"Yes," Camilla cried encouragingly; "and then?"

"Then I should have told you I cannot eat alone. I 've tried for several days but without avail, and as you are not lacking heart—I should have said that you have kept your heart intact—I would have asked if you would have gone to dinner with me.

If you go upstairs now you 'll hear me using my wireless."

Camilla reflected. "I 've an engagement. I 'm perfectly sure I 've some kind of an engagement."

"Of course you have; so have I; so has everybody," Ambrose agreed cheerfully.

At this moment a returning hearse drove past going to the stables in the neighborhood of Bleeker Street. To the rear of the hearse clung a child. She had the white face of Pierrot and grinned impudently at Ambrose. Her braided black hair bobbed up and down.

"There," said Ambrose, "I never loved a fond gazelle but Sonya Mucha went and caught a ride on a hearse or something. Hurry, Camilla, put your hand in mine and run if you want to have dinner with me. If I call to her the driver will see her. She 's liable to be arrested and brought before the Children's Court or something. I

tell you Super-children give a lot of trouble in this world. There comes the policeman now."

The policeman gave one hurried glance at the hearse and walked on, looking with intentness in the opposite direction.

"Why," Camilla gasped, "should I be running after a hearse with you? Why should I run down to Bleecker Street after a child with limbs like a spider because she chooses to ride on the back of a hearse?"

"It 's just one of the things we have to do," said Ambrose. "It 's just one of the penalties we pay for living around here. Have n't you ever taken care of old Papa Mucha's grandchild? It 's time you did your bit. It 's done," he said bitterly.

Other people had now come along, and Moriarity, the sculptor, large and bull-headed, cried, "Here, take hold of my arm, Miss Deerfield, and I 'll pull you along," while Mary Dean and Siddell galloped past

them, Mary singing "The Valkyrie" at the top of her contralto voice.

"This is no way not to get arrested," said Ambrose. "This is no way to protect an Anarchist child from the minions of the law."

The hearse now slowed up, the driver descended.

"Aw, Sonya," he beseeched, "come, git off me hearse. Aw, git off. The new cop, bad luck to him, down to Bliker, he 's sore on ye already—the way ye was drawin' a crowd pritindin' ye was a monkey on ould Caruso's hand-organ. An 't was dancin' in the street ye wuz the other day like Pavlovy."

"I made twenty-seven cents," Sonya responded, "and needed it."

"I know, darlin'," responded the hearse driver. "But he did n't. 'T is green he is and don't know Bliker Street, at all, at all, and don't git on wid anyone, and 't is

tac'less, you know, Sonya, ye is wid cops! I know 't is yer religion to hate bulls and not yer fault at all, yer gran'pa bringin' ye up like that. But, Sonya, git off frim there, for the heart of me would be scalded if ye wus arrested and me on the hearse I wus drivin' mesilf."

"Come on, Sonya, get off," said Moriarity, taking her up in his arms and throwing her over his shoulder. "Come on, let 's take her up to Grandpa and get some dinner. Come on everybody and let 's get some delicatessen."

"I 'll come if Jim will come," said Sonya to the hearse driver.

"Will yer gran'pa like the company?" he inquired.

"What does he live for?" Sonya responded. "It 's his idea of fun."

"I have some money," said Mary Dean. "I 've been raising capital for my cream-puff shop."

In a moment they had purchased a vast variety to eat and drink, and proceeded through a court-yard, up a flight of stairs, over roofs, into a loft which was Papa Mucha's residence where, when working, he colored reproductions of tanagra figurines for uptown shops, giving them a marvelous patina. He also filed saws and mended dolls.

Moriarity went ahead, still carrying Sonya like a torch, her face aflame with laughter and deviltry, her dark eyes in her little thin face like pools of ink lighted by a red fire.

"Who is the child?" Camilla asked.

"Camilla," said Ambrose, "I 'm afraid you have been exclusive after all, how else could you have escaped the Super-child, the Anarchist child? Her grandfather is the most charming person in all the world, and he has brought up Sonya to express her individuality fully. If she feels like catch-

ing a ride on a hearse, she does it. Instead of the Bible she has had Nietzsche; instead of the catechism, Max Stirner; instead of geography she was from the cradle taught to dance by a fat, old Italian ballerina who has lately died."

Mucha had just finished putting the eyes in a large doll. He placed it tenderly on a table.

"Why you make my heart so to break, Sonya?" the old man cried. "In my mouth it comes my heart."

"Shure 't was on me hearse she wus catchin' a ride," Jim contributed.

Old Mucha raised his hands to heaven.

"Der individualismus was all right," he cried, "but dis tomfoolismus was too much. Mit dat child's tomfoolismus I am destroyed. Ah, I see a beautiful lady I have not yet met. She will agree with me. I ask you, would you be pleased if your child vas catching rides for hearses? Say, I vill

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play for you how I feel such disappointments. You and the others shall arrange supper and I shall play my disappointments and Sonya shall dance."

CHAPTER IV

AMBROSE was taking tea in Camilla's studio. The studio walls were of gold and formed a background for a peaceful and mellow Buddha who sat contemplatively upon a lotus flower. There was little furniture in the room, dim rugs were on the floor, a great piano made one realize the room's size. Strange colored azaleas bloomed in formal style at each side of the mantel. It was all charming, harmonious, and inevitably called to mind the interior decorator.

One gathered that that phase had the room's owner in thrall. Camilla was dressed with the utmost frivolity, in a tea gown that coat of which was peach colored, whose trousers were saffron, and which had

a green and silver vest. Above her neck frivolity ceased; her hair was brushed, one might say, almost fiercely back from her temples, and done into a truculent knot. The effect of propriety was marred through the fact that she had stained her mouth with scarlet, as though it was some flower and a mere adjunct to her costume.

Ambrose contemplated her with severity. "You are a preposterous person," he remarked. "It is preposterous that you are self-supporting, that you come from plain people up state, and went to Sunday school."

Camilla at this made a face at him. "If you'd seen the clothes I wore when a child," she murmured, "you'd see why I wear these now. I am merely reacting."

"There should be sumptuary laws," said Ambrose.

"Indeed there should," Camilla responded cordially, allowing her eyes to

travel over Ambrose's garments. He surveyed them not without complacency.

"Look at your hair!" Ambrose continued.

"Yes, do," Camilla urged. She approached her head an inch nearer his, and turned it from side to side in an upsetting fashion.

"And your mouth," continued Ambrose. Camilla ran the end of a finger swiftly across her lips.

"You cannot placate me by your wiles any longer," Ambrose announced. Camilla looked hurt, then she placed one finger beneath her right eye and very slightly drew the lower lid downward. The effect was indecorous.

"How long ago is it since my cat walked in here and you sent him back with a marigold in his collar? How long is it, Camilla, since you scraped acquaintance with me?"

"Five weeks and—and two days," re-

plied Camilla in a tone calculated to soften the heart of Mentor.

"Quite long enough," said Ambrose. "The moment I saw your head out of your attic window, I knew you were not one to be left lying around loose. Everything I have seen of you since proves it. God knows I have never cared to get married. But this kind of thing can go on no longer. You need to be taken care of."

There was silence. Then, in a very careful tone, Camilla remarked: "Do I understand this to be a proposal of marriage?"

"No, Camilla," said Ambrose, "this is no proposal. This is an announcement. Your will has nothing whatever to do with it. You are going to marry me. Of course, if that has been your opinion all along, so much the better. If you have a violent contrary opinion, we will have a wonderful time changing your mind. You are not to be trusted alone. You need a

keeper, my dear girl. You need a husband. In short, you need me!"

Camilla clasped her hands across her knees. "I had never suspected you of wanting to marry—any one."

"I haven't wanted to," said Ambrose with nobility. "But duty calls me. I am the only man who will ever want to marry you—who knows how bad you are. I understand you."

"Oh, you do, do you?" said Camilla, menacingly. She rose and stood before him. "You're a very impertinent young man, that's what you are!"

"Then you don't like my plan?" Ambrose inquired—his voice was disarmingly meek. "See here, Camilla, be serious. I am. I talk like a fool at times. It's that darn self-consciousness of mine, I suppose. And the fool jargon we all speak around here. But hang it, Camilla, you know that you need me for a husband

as well as I do. Think how they take up their time and yours. Think—think of everything! Of course, the fact that I can't and won't live without you isn't worth considering."

Camilla's face softened, she walked toward him very tentatively. He walked toward her. She threw her hand up in the gesture of a Japanese dancer.

"There," he cried bitterly. "That's what I mean. That's why you've no business loose. That's why you're always in hot water."

"Well, whose fault is it this time?" Camilla inquired hotly. "Mine, I want to know? Am *I* proposing, am I trying to save *you*?"

"It would be becoming on your part if you did—even though unnecessary."

"Oh, unnecessary," she cried. "I suppose your life is not also like a three-ringed circus?"

"Come, come, don't quarrel with your future husband, Camilla," Ambrose warned her.

"You 're not," Camilla cried.

"Why do you think I 'm not?" Ambrose inquired politely.

"You can't be until you do what 's the impossible for you." Suddenly Camilla had grown serious and a little wistful. "Until you 've done a single sincerely unselfish thing. I don't mean kind things, like flowers and all that, but the kind of things other people around here do for each other all the time. But you—you won't! You 're spoiled. You 've been a pet of the other kind of people too long, rich and clever women whose own men are too busy or too dull to amuse them. You 're a charming, whimsical thing, Ambrose, but—"

Ambrose held up his hand. "Desist!" he said. "In other words, shut up! I 've

all I can now assimilate. At present it looks to me as though you were merely jealous of my social success!"

"Jealous, jealous!" cried Camilla.

"And being vain—" Ambrose continued, "well, there 's nothing for it except for me to bring you back the golden deed."

CHAPTER V

AMBROSE descended four long flights, he walked to the next door and reascended four long flights. He entered and he was not, as usual, greeted by the purring of his cat. By the light of his fire he found his way to the gas. It was a studio put together from odds and ends, but there was a touch of enchantment about it. It was a place in which to tell one's self stories. That it was instinctive and not planned revealed the weakness of Ambrose's character, according to modern standards of what a young man's room should be. It was, however, deadly uncomfortable to live in, cold and drafty, and with but one or two comfortable places to sit, so one should not blame Ambrose too much for its picturesqueness.

Tonight when Ambrose came in, the place, for no reason he could define, had an air of strangeness. He lit the light, it flared with dim mellowness over the room, which, until one examined its component parts, seemed rather the threadbare grandeur of former days than the abode of a modern young gentleman. He called his cat. That stately but forbidding animal he discovered lurking on the top of the piano, as he did only when deeply disturbed.

Ambrose looked around, everything but the cat was in place, nothing had altered, and yet the sense of strangeness pursued him. He sat down, took up a book and tried to read. The attic creaked strangely. It had many noises, but tonight there was a new sound, something unaccustomed and strange and so vague that it troubled one—besides, the sentinel cat refused to come down from the piano. Ambrose aban-

doned his book. He went to the piano and sat down. He played but vaguely, but found much consolation from his musical wanderings. Tonight there was no consolation, he was watching with too great intentness for the vague little unusual sound. "I have a poor nervous system," he concluded.

For a long time he fought down his ever-growing conviction that there was some one in the room. There were, after all, very few places where a fullgrown person could hide. Finally, Ambrose gave way to his nerves, looked beneath the couch, behind the secretary. At last he approached a little screen covered with a lovely old brocade. It had an ancient and expensive air, but the talented Ambrose had made it himself, and had stolen the brocade from a trusting friend. He paused before it, unmistakably there was the shadow of sound from it. The sound, if one wished to be

fanciful, as of some one breathing. His heart beating rapidly, he cautiously pulled the screen aside. Seated on a box in which Ambrose, when expecting company, put everything from shoes to pipes, sat Sonya Mucha. Her hands, which were meager as bird's claws, were clasped tightly across her knees. Her face and her mouth were as white as Pierrot's. Indeed, she gave the impression of some creature not quite real. Beside her reposed an amorphous bundle, and a carpet-bag so odd in build, so venerable of aspect, that it seemed the grandfather of all the carpet-bags of the world. Noah, when repairing into the ark, must have carried with him this carpet-bag, and it must have come to him down the corridors of time.

For a moment the child and Ambrose contemplated each other. Ambrose spoke first.

"Good evening, Sonya," he remarked.

"I 'm very glad to see you, but I 'm sure you 're not quite comfortable where you 're sitting." At this Sonya rose to her feet and cried at him.

"You are mean—mean! To make fun of me, and for your own vainness, too. Just so that you can *fa figura* to yourself."

"I was only trying to be polite," murmured Ambrose.

"You were not!" she cried. "You were trying to be clever. It is an abominable trick. It is polite to seem surprised when one finds people behind screens!"

"Oh," said Ambrose contritely, "is it? I 'll remember. You see, I 've found so few people behind screens."

"Stop!" cried Sonya, stamping a foot. "Stop being funny. I can't bear it."

"Sonya," inquired Ambrose seriously, "what were you doing behind that screen and why were you there?" She had been waiting for this; it was her cue.

"I was there because I was waiting for you. I was there because I was afraid," she responded.

"Afraid?" Ambrose wondered. "I thought you were a super-child. And what are those bags, Sonya?"

"That 's just it—that 's just it!" cried Sonya. "I know I 'm doing right. I know the world owes it to me—but I got—cold feet. Those bags are here because *I have come to stay!*"

You have seen with what insouciance he faced Sonya and her luggage behind his screen. This was his creed, for he was descended from the race of beaux and elegants whose life was spent in quelling surprise. You have followed Ambrose through a surprise and a proposal, and saw how true to his selected type he remained—but now his humorous calm deserted him.

"You have what!" he cried. "Say it over again, Sonya!"

"I have come to stay," Sonya repeated stolidly. "You are going to take care of me. The world owes me an opportunity. You know I have talent. So—I have come." She sat there, very small but firm as the Sphinx, though her words seemed to Ambrose like the ravings of chimera. Ambrose sat down.

"Look here, my good child," he began weakly, "what will your grandpa—"

"Don't begin on that!" she warned. "Don't ask me what my grandfather is going to do without me. He has had his opportunity. What did he do with it? He made a beautiful human being. He developed his gift as a marvelous personality. But my gift is dancing. You all sit around here and talk about art. I *am* art. I have more true feeling in my smallest finger than the rest of you in your great bodies. Moreover, I am not lazy—I! Do not argue, for I have thought where I could best live,

and I have decided with you!" Her voice trembled slightly. It was evident that she had in imagination been many times over this conversation, and that, moreover, she was in deadly earnest.

"Hang it all, it won't do, you see. Go along and find a girl to help you in your career."

Sonya looked down. "Do not waste time in arguing, but tell me where I am to sleep," she said. She threw her head up sharply. "Do not for a moment suppose that I feel you are doing me a favor—I think it is a privilege!"

"No doubt, no doubt," Ambrose agreed. "The only thing is, it is n't *done*. There are societies for the prevention of cruelty to children—for the prevention of all kinds of things. You will be doocid hard to explain, you know—doocid!"

"I shall not explain," Sonya replied coldly.

"Oh, I daresay not," Ambrose responded bitterly. "Besides, I am indigent, my dear child—well connected, but indigent!"

"You spend foolishly more than I'll cost—I've watched you. Every one says you get a great deal for your stories."

"When I write 'em," Ambrose moodily replied. "I write as the early Britons hunted—merely for food."

"You'll work more now, you'll see. I don't agree with grandfather's theories. I don't believe in just sitting around and starving and talking about the revolution. No! I believe in *doing*. I believe in art, and art never comes by sitting around. You will work, Ambrose, as you never did before!"

"Look here, Sonya," Ambrose began cautiously; his gaily flippant manner had vanished.

"Ambrose," she said, "you are a short

sport. Here I come knocking at your door, saying I am Adventure—I am Life—and you would turn me away—if you could.”

“Look here,” said Ambrose, “little girls of fourteen can’t come knocking around talking like that—or like Max Stirner. I’ll be darned if they can! I’ve got some character, too; and I’ll bet your grandfather won’t be any more pleased by this than the time you almost got arrested for catching a ride on a hearse. A precious lot he cared when you told him it was a manifestation of your individuality! This joke has gone far enough. I’ll take you to your grandfather.” Sonya had grown even paler.

“You can’t,” she said.

“Why not?” asked Ambrose.

“I’m not going back to him.” Her lip was trembling.

“Why not?” Ambrose asked again.

“What’s happened, Sonya?”

"Grandfather 's dead!" said Sonya, and buried her face in her hands.

"Sonya!" cried Ambrose. "Oh, Sonya! When?"

"Four days ago." He took her icy little hand in his. "Poor, plucky little brat," he thought. Then he noticed she was trembling and shaking all over. "Sonya," he cried. "Sonya, when did you eat last? I believe you 're hungry!"

She looked at him with blazing eyes. "I 'm not," she lied, and fainted. Ambrose picked her up and carried her to a couch. He got sherry and poured a few drops through her white lips.

"It 's all right, Sonya," he told her. "Of course you 'll stay here."

"Not because you pity me! Don't you dare to pity me," she flared.

"Oh, no—no, indeed," Ambrose assured her. "Just because you came, you know." She peered at him and fainted again.

CHAPTER VI

THERE came a knock at the door, and a large colored woman did what she would have called "eased herself" into the room.

"Wot you got there, Mist' Ambrose?" she inquired. "My Lor', if 't ain't that An'chis' chile, Sonya Mucha. Pore lamb, she ain't got no more meat on her nur a spider, so she ain'. Here Mist' Ambrose, lemme do that." She lifted the child tenderly in her arms. "Yere baby darlin', yere open yur eyes. Don' you know your 'Gusta, honey? Wot-all ails her, you reckon, Mist' Ambrose?"

"Hunger," replied Ambrose grimly.

"Pore lil' thing!" Augusta repeated. "Ain't it awful! Her grandpa, he was a lovely man; awful queer, but lovely! No-

body lived did n't love Mist' Mucha. It 's a pity bein' lovely ain't a payin' job for a man. S' all the job pore Mist' Mucha had. Oh, 't was a real treat to hear that man go on. Jus' like the Bible, if you did n't lissen to the sense. Talk! He was grander 'an mos' preachers. Where this chile been, you reckon, sense he daid?" All this time she was ministering to Sonya, rubbing her cold hands and feet. "Lor', this chile 's made o' iron. She cud make her livin' in the circus any day. Las' week I came down Wes' Broadway. 'Lo, Sonya,' sez I. 'Lo, 'Gusta,' sez she, an', grave like a judge, she done turn a cart-w'heel and walked right on lak that 's how ev'vybuddy say good-mornin'. 'Sonya, chile,' sez I, 'you-all sure get pinched.' She jus' wunk her eye at me. 'Some mornin's,' sez she, 'I 'm boun' to turn cart-w'heels. It spresses ma individuality, and don' you worry about no cop.' It don't express the

individuality o' no cop aroun' dis yere square to pinch me!' Mist' Ambrose, she ain't a little girl, she 's jus' a bunch o' inja rubber an' steel. Ain't yo', honey?" Sonya had opened her eyes. "Yere, you tak' this." Augusta had warmed milk at the fire. "She ain't fit to be moved," she told Ambrose.

"Certainly not."

"I'm never goin' to move," Sonya piped. Her spirit seemed to have removed itself to a far distance, but from this distance it still communicated its dominant idea. "I've come to stay!" Together they put her to bed and fed her, and she fell into a sleep of exhaustion.

'Gusta eased herself from the bedroom to the studio. "Wot-all goin' to become o' that An'chis' chile? Who-all gwine do for her and raise her? She 's fo'teen, and she 's done jus' lak she feel all dese years. An—s'mat. Don't it seem kinda careless

o' Providence to leave a young un o' jus' that age a-laying aroun', Mist' Ambrose?"

"Don't worry about her," Ambrose said. "She just told you what she was going to do. She 's going to stay here—awhile, anyway." He knocked his head with his hand.

"Fool!" he exclaimed. "Blockhead! Here it is. Here 's the Golden Deed! I was so busy I never thought. Of course; of course!"

'Gusta looked at him with curious melancholy.

"You ak," she informed him sadly, "lak you was batty."

"I 'm not batty, but I have been dense," he replied, with dignity. He was knocking on the wall which separated his room from Camilla's. At the answering knock he seized his hat.

"W're you-all goin', Mist' Ambrose?" 'Gusta inquired.

"Why, I 'm just going to drop over to Miss Deerfield, to ask her again to marry me—on account of Sonya, you know."

'Gusta looked at him with swift suspicion. "Never can tell how a jag agwine to take 'em," she murmured.

Ambrose descended his stairs and ascended those of the house next door with a swiftness that spoke well for his early training. When Camilla opened the door he had resumed his elegant calm. She was already dressed in an evening frock of two shades of orange.

"Camilla," Ambrose said, "you look like the Sun God's daughter." Camilla smiled and turned slowly around that Ambrose need miss no detail of her costume.

"I 've got to hurry," she reminded him. He ignored her.

"Camilla," he said, "you are clairvoyant. You have dressed to match my golden deed. You are part of it, you see. Since

I left you, I decided to adopt a child. I don't approve of this new child-with-one-parent idea at all."

"Stop raving," Camilla begged, "and come to the point."

"The point is this, Camilla, that I can't conveniently adopt this child unless you marry me. It's Sonya Mucha, you see. I found her in my place when I came in. Her grandfather's dead—and so you understand——"

"I can hear my taxi honking before the door," said Camilla, "and my taste for your levity lessens with every honk."

"Levity," cried Ambrose. "I was never more serious in my life. You wanted a golden deed. Well, here it is. It's a golden deed, is n't it, to provide a home and parents for Sonya Mucha; and anyway it's up to me, is n't it? I could n't do less, could I?" He spoke in the tone of one who confidently awaits the response of

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

"Ambrose," said Camilla, "you have been eating Pyote Beans, the way they did over at the Castaignes', and every one had to be carried screaming to an asylum, or you have chosen a very poor time for a practical joke. I was beginning to take your proposal of marriage seriously. I reflected on it all the time I was dressing. Now you come chattering to me like this."

"But, Camilla," he cried, "she 's fallen sick in my room. She has n't anywhere else to go—and she was sitting behind my green brocade screen frightened to death, but positive that I would n't turn her out. She has chosen to come to me, you see, above every one else in the world."

"Oh, she has, has she—and since she 's chosen you, have you consulted her about having me for what you call a parent? Not for a moment that I 'm going to be

one to that spider-legged, grown-up girl, who 'll be dancing in a cabaret before you can turn around, I can tell you." Camilla's eyes shone. She spoke with heat.

"When a bird flies in one's window—" Ambrose began.

"Bird!" cried Camilla, stamping her foot. "Albatross! Boa-constrictor! You don't know what little girls of that age are like. I do! I've been one! We've got 'em at home—hyenas, serpents!"

"Nevertheless, if it 's all the same to you, I 'm going to look after this—albatross for a while."

"Why, certainly! Why should n't it be?" Camilla replied coldly. "Pose any way you want to. You wear your poses as well as you do your clothes, but for heaven's sake don't be noble about it, or sentimental. Don't talk to me about birds flying in your window. If Sonya Mucha

was any kind of a bird she 'd be a wer-bird!"

"You might try to understand—I thought you would. I was sure you would," said Ambrose reproachfully.

"I understand you perfectly," said Camilla. "I am able to look through the hole in the grindstone—but you, you don't in the least understand yourself. Don't, I beg of you, go asking people to marry you in this offhand way of yours. Some one will do it some time, and where will you be?"

They descended the stairs in gloomy silence.

Outside the house a dark man leaned against the iron railing. He looked at Camilla with a hungry, brooding gaze.

"Good evening, Camilla," he said, and started to walk away.

"Askoff!" Camilla cried. "You can come and play for me tonight."

"Very good," he responded gravely, and bowed again.

"What are you doing with Askoff?" Ambrose demanded.

"I have just adopted him—as a son. I shall tell him tonight. He will be entranced," Camilla replied lightly.

"Camilla," Ambrose urged, "don't fool with Askoff. He's not the kind to play with."

"I'm not," Camilla mimicked. "I never was more serious in my life!"

There rose in Ambrose's heart an emotion for which he had no name and which had no previous place in his experience. He longed to shake Camilla. He wanted to carry her back to her room and lock her in it, and keep her on bread and water.

"What was he doing leaning against your gate, anyway?"

"Waiting for me," Camilla replied, with a heavenly smile. "He always waits for

me to come down to go to dinner, then he says, 'Good evening, Camilla,' and goes away. Sometimes he brings me flowers. By the way, since I refuse to chaperon your werbird, what are you going to do about her?"

"I 'm going," Ambrose responded gloomily, "to telegraph my Aunt Adelaide, 'Come at once; have adopted female orphan.' "

Camilla slammed shut the door of the taxi. As she drove away she stuck her head through the window and cried:

"An Askoff for your Mucha!"

CHAPTER VII

SUNK deep in thought Ambrose mounted the steps of his house. He felt there were ten thousand of them and that it required a forty horse-power effort to lift each foot. He wanted to break something, and what he wanted to break was the will of her whom he termed that red-headed hussy, for she had broken his heart. His golden deed seemed to him the act of a quixotic fool and he wished he were out of the whole business; yet he knew no matter what price he had to pay he was going to see it through.

“If you can’t turn a dog or cat into the street that comes to you, how can you turn out a child?” was what he asked himself. He had twice tried sending for the Society

to take trusting animals away and found himself unable to let them go. "There's nothing," he soliloquized, "except a patrol wagon or an ambulance I could send for to take away Sonya, then when I saw them coming I know how I'd feel. I know my weakness and limitations and I'll abide by them even though they ruin my life."

In this melancholy mood he entered his abode. Augusta, the colored maid, was sitting before the fire.

"Well?" she inquired.

For answer Ambrose threw his hat across the room.

"I guess Miss Camilla she don't see her way clear to doing what you ask, do she?"

"No," said Ambrose, "she did n't. She says she won't marry me to be a mother to a full-grown child. The selfishness of the women of this generation is beyond belief."

"Now, Mr. Ambrose, you know as well

as me," said Augusta, "that ain't no way to lure no young lady down to City Hall, offerin' 'em the job to be mother to Sonya Mucha."

Here it was that Sonya sat upright on the couch.

"Be a mother to me!" she cried. "Who's going to be a mother to me?"

"No one ain't goin' to be no mother to you, honey lamb," said Augusta. "You ain't goin' to have no mother."

"I heard what Augusta said," she cried to the unfortunate Ambrose. "You've been trying to get a woman to marry you to take care of me."

"Well, not exactly that," said Ambrose in a tone he tried to make soothing. "I tried to get—a young lady to do me the honor to take my hand."

"Oh, I thought better of you than that," cried Sonya. "Marriage, it's a degrading institution, a horrible limiting thing!"

"Now, don't you go get all wrought up," Augusta admonished. "Her gran'paw brought her up like that not believin' in marriage an' all," Augusta explained.

"Don't try to talk to me about marriage," said Sonya. "Don't ever try to speak about it to me. I can't talk about horrid things like that."

"Look here, Sonya," said Ambrose, "you can think what you like about marriage and I can think what I like."

"Oh, no, you won't; no, you won't! Marriage is the most degrading of all human institutions."

"Sonya," he said, "do you believe in freedom?"

"I do, and that 's why I don't believe in marriage," she cried at him.

"Don' argue with her," said Augusta. "Don' you know no better about wimen than to argue with 'em when they 're all wrought up? Leave her lay."

"No, he can't leave me lay," said Sonya. "Who will he marry—that red-headed girl? She's a grasshopper, a butterfly, a society girl. See the mole-skin coat she had on. Think of how many poor families that would keep alive!"

"I won't," cried Ambrose. "I won't think of coats and limousines in terms of poor families, and if you go on doing it you'll make me a drunken wreck. I'm easily driven to drink, Sonya. I left my home because I was bored by the talk, and I can do it again so easy you'd think it was my second nature."

But here Sonya gave vent to an extraordinary fit of temper. It was to other tempers that Ambrose had witnessed what one single spark might be to a pyrotechnic display. She cried out at social institutions and Camilla, mingling them all in her invective.

Ambrose regarded her tranquilly. The

more angry she became the more desire he had to laugh. While his ears were appalled, there was something soothing to his heart in this unreserved rage. He had often felt like acting this way, but he never had. He waited until it had run its course. Finally she ceased.


"Are you through?" Ambrose inquired.

"Yes," she said. She smiled at him a funny and ingratiating smile.

"Do you often do that?" She shook her head and smiled again.

"Grandpa," she suggested, "used to throw a glass of water in my face when I began."

"Oh, very well," said Ambrose. "I'll have a glass handy. Look here," he said, "you and I may as well understand each other first as last. Now you can go on and do what you feel like. You can turn handsprings in the street and you can act



like a hyena when you want to. But there's just one thing you've got to let be. *I'm that thing.* I'm going to turn the kind of handsprings I like. I'm going to go to church if I want to. Your talk about the marriage ceremony has almost made me revere the altar. I've only twice in my life thought of getting married and neither time for my own sake—once for you and once for some one else," he ended virtuously. "We're each to have our autonomy in this alliance and," he continued, "I may as well tell you that my aunt, Adelaide Babcock, is coming to visit me."

"That's nice," said Sonya. She smiled at him again. She had curled herself up and was peering at him from her shock of dark hair, and she seemed to him like some little shy animal.

He took up a book. Augusta snored gently. All was peace. Sonya reached

forth her hand and took his in hers and then he saw that slow tears were sliding down her face.

"What 's the matter?" he asked her.

She turned her head and sobbed into the pillow:

"I want my grandpa," she said.

He patted her head; there was nothing he could say. It was as if he could feel her little heart breaking within her.

"Nietzsche," she sobbed with difficulty, "don't help with death much—I never thought of him dying—I was going to be a great interpretive dancer—and take care of him—always."

Ambrose put his arm consoling about her.

"Don't cry," he said. "Don't cry, you 're here with me."

"Yes, but I haven't anybody to take care of."

"You can take care of me," said Ambrose courageously.

This comforted her a little. Clinging to his hand, she cried for a time, and then stopped. Ambrose sat there with his hand in hers. Suddenly she sat up in bed, her big eyes on him.

"Ambrose," she said, "Ambrose—you know what I said about being grateful. I try not to be. I don't believe in it. I feel I should worry, but you can't do like you feel like always. I can't help feeling grateful, Ambrose."

He patted her hand. It was a difficult moment, as heart-breaking as if the dog you pick up on the street should open his mouth and speak.

Ambrose's place was full of slumber and yet it was not late. From next door came the swelling, heart-breaking sounds of the

violin. It was more than he could bear. The violin seemed to be rehearsing to him all the varied emotions of the day. He felt if the violin player didn't stop he would presently cry like a child. But as was right and proper at his age, he was ashamed of his emotions; they made him feel weak to the very center of his heart. So he hardened himself by thinking: "I could cheerfully cut that young Pole's throat."

At last the playing stopped. There came over Ambrose an irresistible desire to see Camilla. He wanted to go to her and put his head in her lap and tell her how unhappy he was. He tiptoed through the back bedroom, out into the front studio. He cautiously knocked on the wall. There was a cautious little tap. Camilla put her head out of the window.

"Camilla," he asked, "are you happy?"

"No," Camilla said, "are you?"

"I 'm wretched," said Ambrose, "utterly wretched. I 've got to see you, Camilla; it is n't late."

"Come then," said Camilla.

She was waiting for him at the door.

"Camilla," he cried, "do you love me just a little bit? Say that you do."

"I do love you," she cried. "I do; I do! I don't want to love you, but I can't help it. I don't want to love anybody yet, but you 're such an idiot, you 're so foolish, you need some one to take care of you."

"Yes, I do awfully need some one to take care of me. There 's no telling what will happen to me if I don't have some one to take care of me. Won't you, won't you come right away?"

She drew back from him a little.

"Some day; sometime! Not now, not with the Anarchist child around, not till I 've played and played and played and played, not till I 've forgotten my awful

blue serge childhood. I feel like a butterfly, you know, that can remember when it was nothing but a caterpillar, that can remember sleeping in a cold cocoon hung upside down from the eaves somewhere, and I love my golden wings and I want to fly right in the sun till they are all draggled and battered."

She looked at him wistfully.

"Would you be fool enough to love me even if my golden wings were draggled?"

CHAPTER VIII

AMBROSE paced moodily up and down under the great vaulted arch of the Grand Central, waiting for the train which should bring to him his Aunt Adelaide. He would have been the first to admit that he was not in Harmony with the Infinite. Within the past twenty-four hours the two women in the world closest to him had both expressed their desire to take care of him. If there was one thing in the world Ambrose hated it was being taken care of.

He liked to have his clothes left alone. In affluence he employed a valet service; when indigent, which was more often the case, he had his clothes done by Goldberg, the sad-eyed little tailor around the corner. Augusta mended his socks. His idea of a place to keep away from was a

place where one's dressing-gown and slippers were laid out by careful female hands. He liked doing things for himself and for other people.

He was a young man of sound nerves, but there was one thing that drove him to the point of throwing something, and that was kindly little attentions such as wives and mothers are fond of bestowing on one. Ambrose was a natural camper. Had he been as talented a writer as he was a camper, his name would already be known in contemporary literature. And with Augusta to clean up for him now and then, he did for himself very nicely.

He saw no escape for himself, and gloomy, mis-shapen thoughts crowded and jostled one another in the dim cavern of his mind. Here he was twenty-seven years old, a personable young man, of an undoubtedly pleasing exterior, sound of limb and able to do for himself, and the only

sentiment that he was able to arouse in the minds of the young females around him was of his extraordinary helplessness. A fast express was bringing his aunt closer to him every second and she might be the third.

"Let her not think," he reflected savagely, "that she 's going to take care of me. She 's here for just two purposes—to be a chaperon and to have a good time. If her idea of a good time is looking after me, I shall commit suicide or maybe murder."

Suddenly a thought that had evidently been growing in his mind, jumped at him from ambush. How would Mrs. Adelaide Babcock take Sonya, anyway? "I bet you anything," he thought, "she 'll consider adopting a child lacking in thrift." And would she take to Sonya, he wondered, or would she take her as her Christian duty, which is to say, as one takes a pill.

Then, at last he saw her coming toward him. She was a little gray old lady, dressed in gray, with a reassuring pink flower in her bonnet. Her cheeks were pink, and excitement shone in her eyes.

As they went down Fifth Avenue in a taxi, Mrs. Babcock leaned back with a sigh of content. "Oh," she said, "it 's too perfectly beautiful!"

And as Ambrose looked at his aunt he realized that the most innocent city-raised child of three was sophisticated beside her, and in the way she regarded New York, Ambrose sensed her tolerance as wide as the horizon and her sense of humor as deep as the sea. "This woman," he thought, "has come to save me. She shall be my bulwark."

"Aunt Adelaide," he said, "can you understand a man's not wanting to have his socks darned?"

She looked at him mildly. "I can understand a man's not wanting most anything," she replied.

"Then," he said, "keep the orphan child from darning my socks. Something tells me she'll want to. If any other young woman comes in bent on that or some similar job, keep her off."

A glance of lightning intelligence illuminated Mrs. Babcock's eyes; a smile that was like a swift ripple of water over a quiet pond flashed over her face. It was a smile that said, "I get you"; a smile of heavenly comprehension.

"Women impose on men awful, in these days. How'd you happen to think of adopting an orphan, Ambrose?"

"I did n't—she adopted me. All her family are dead and she had n't any place to go; so she just came and said she was going to stay. You can't turn away a

child, can you?" he pleaded. "Not out into the streets or send her to a Bide-a-Wee Home?"

"No," said his aunt, "of course you can't. God just points His finger at us now and then and says, 'You do this,' and there's nothing to do but just do it. But He chooses some awfully queer things for us to do sometimes and some awfully queer people to do them." She smiled at Ambrose again.

"Oh, speaking of God," said Ambrose, trying to make his voice cheerful, "she don't believe in Him."

"Uh, Uh?" remarked Mrs. Babcock encouragingly, but her eyes were fastened out of the window entranced with the spectacle of New York.

"No, but she believes in lots of other things, things you've been lucky enough never to have heard of," Ambrose contin-

ned gloomily. "And she has n't any inhibitions."

"Inhibitions?" his aunt inquired.

"Things that keep you from doing the things that you want to," Ambrose explained.

Mrs. Babcock reflected for a moment. "I don't believe I 've ever had any except my relatives," she replied.

As they came up the stairs a steady thump, thump, thump made itself heard. It grew louder with each step.

"It's Sonya, the super-child," he warned his aunt.

They opened the door. Sonya's back was turned to them and she didn't hear them come in. Her hair hung around her in clouds. She was doing flip-flaps. She pushed her hair back from her eyes, color was in her face. She looked to Ambrose like some strange little wood creature

For a second she stared at his aunt, with shining, wild eyes that were bold and shy at once, and having no inhibitions, she came forward swiftly and kissed her, while Mrs. Babcock folded her in her arms as if she were welcoming back some little girl she had known long ago.

"I see you 're feeling better," said Ambrose, "so I think if you get ready for dinner we 'll all go out."

"Go out!" cried Sonya. "Eat in expensive restaurants! Two women in the house and you go out and buy food! I've had Augusta get something anyway and it 's all ready to cook."

"Oh, Sonya," cried Mrs. Babcock. "Oh, Sonya, *it 's been twenty-seven years since I've been to a restaurant!*"

"Sonya, don't take the joy out of life," warned Ambrose. "I love to be lavish. Come on, we 'll eat in the cellar of the

Brevoort. When did you learn to cook anyway?"

"Me," said Sonya. "I 've always cooked. I 've always had some one to cook *for*. When I was little we took our meals at Tia's and I helped her. . . . 'Sonya,' she said, 'your grandpa is a Santo d'Oro, that means a golden saint, and you must take care of him. Some one has always taken care of him. Precious things like golden saints must be taken care of.' So I learned to cook and do everything."

Sonya ran to put on her things. Aunt Adelaide followed her with pitying eyes.

"There," she said, "that 's what ails that child. There 's nothing like taking care of an irresponsible grandparent for killing a child's youth. Youth and age when they live together can't both be irresponsible."

CHAPTER IX

IT was in vain that Ambrose wore Fifth Avenue clothes or that from time to time he dined politely in the neighborhood of the Park. In reality he was as parochial as the rest of the village. To him there were two sorts of people in the world—those that at one time or another one might expect to meet in the cellar of the Brevoort and those one would not. The Brevoort, he claimed, was always full of people that you wished you knew and whom afterward you wished you did n't. In those rare moments when life hung heavy on his hands, he went there, sure that some one who would amuse him or would be amused by him would drift through.

Like all its patrons he grumbled at it, called it monotonous, crowded, smoky, full

of slummers; threatened to find another hangout, and never, when he could afford it, went anywhere else. It was his theory that the now notorious Village had its beginnings in the café of the old hotel and without it, would cease to exist. He also believed that when Sailors' Snug Harbor fulfilled its threat and abolished this hotel and its sister, The Lafayette, that the Washington Arch would fall down, that the buildings around the Square would go up in smoke and the rest of the inhabitants would pack their grips and move. Deserted houses would stare with blank and ghastly eyes on the solitude.

As usual the place was full of people he knew. Not far from them sat Moriarity, Mary Dean and poor little down-trodden Siddell. Mary Dean was dressed in this year's national costume of the Village, which consists of a smock and a tam. She was the only one who managed to wear

this without looking as though she had been packed away when damp. But Mary looked as fresh as a blossoming branch of a cherry tree, she looked as fresh as Camilla, who, in a brilliant dress of green, sat with Askoff and Glenn Hallet. Camilla's hair was very plain, and her mouth was very red, and every one who went in and out paused to stare at her, and each person who stared at her was stared at insultingly by Askoff.

Soon Ambrose observed that Askoff was glaring belligerently at their table, so was Mary Dean, so were the others. Askoff scowled; the others smiled. Camilla looked elaborately indifferent.

"What 's up," Ambrose wondered.

"I think," Mrs. Babcock explained, "it may be because Sonya is making faces at the young lady in green."

"Sonya," said Ambrose, "stop making squirrel mouths at Camilla. I wish you

would make my friends your friends; it would be so much simpler if you would only manage."

"Not Camilla," she flared. "She is n't serious, and besides, you want to marry her."

"Are you and that lovely young lady in green engaged?" his aunt inquired calmly. All New York was so extraordinary that there was nothing for it but to take everything calmly.

"Not exactly," Ambrose replied. "That is, to say—I 'm just going to marry her. I suppose you might say *I 'm engaged to her.*"

"And she 's not engaged to you?"

"She claims not to be," said Ambrose.

"He tried to get her to marry him to take care of me," Sonya flamed. "I would n't have him do it. I don't like her; she 's not serious. Oh, look," she called, "there 's Trevelyan. I 'm going over to

talk to him, Ambrose." And Sonya made her way among the tables and joined her friend, who was sitting staring at Mary Dean, so absorbed that he was as lost in his contemplation as a mystic.

"Bringing up a girl is quite a job," his Aunt Adelaide now ventured.

"I know," said Ambrose.

"Ambrose, I want to tell you something," his aunt continued. "You know you come of awful set folks. Let 'em begin something and they can't leave off until they 've finished. Now, you 've begun to marry this young lady called Cam'illa, have n't you?"

"Yes, I have," said Ambrose.

"Well, then, you 'd just better find another place for Sonya to board."

"I could n't do it," Ambrose answered.

"Oh, I see—you 've really begun taking care of her. Well, suppose it separates you from your young lady?"

"It won't for long," said Ambrose hopefully. "You see, it's like this—there are n't many people who 'd take care of Sonya, and there are n't many people she 'd stay with. I 'm going to be looking around all the while."

"You 're going to have an awful time taking care of Sonya," his aunt warned him. "She 's got an awful bad case of the maternal instinct, and it 's an ungovernable, savage passion—that 's what it is. And you say she has n't any inhibitions. She 's going to just hate anybody that looks at you or that you look at. Life 's going to be pretty complicated for you, Ambrose, with Camilla and Sonya. But I 'll help you all I can."

"You have n't the maternal instinct, have you, Aunt Adelaide?" he inquired.

"Oh, no," she assured him; "or what I 've got I 've got well under control. I 've seen the dance your aunts have led

their children, and it 's taught me something. There 's just as many bad mothers as there are foolish, mean women. Where the Mother Myth came from, I don't know, when you watch how mothers go on. It 's worst of all, when they 've just got it like Sonya has—by nature—and want to treat all men like their children. There never was any more poisonous theory than that men ought to be treated like children. One reason why the saloons are so full and why a man would rather sit on a cracker-box in a store than in his own home is because so many women 'see a grown son in their husbands.' I wish, for your sake, you did n't have your mind set on both of them."

"Oh, something will turn up about Sonya—she won't be much trouble," said Ambrose easily. "I want you to meet Camilla," he said. "I 'll go and get her."

A smile of comprehension and affection spread over Camilla's face as she was introduced to Mrs. Babcock; a smile that said, "Well, who would have expected to see you in the cellar of the Brevoort?" answered Aunt Adelaide's smile, which said, "And you, whoever would have expected to see you with your hair done like this and a dress of this color?"

They talked until late; Sonya and Mrs. Babcock conversing affectionately over vast gulfs of misunderstanding. More people joined their table and left, to be replaced by others. During the evening both Sonya and his aunt had time to convey to Ambrose their opinions of each other.

"Poor child, she 's as opinionated as a Methodist," was Aunt Adelaide's comment. "I 'm always sorry for children brought to have these puritanical, religious

notions. It don't make any difference what they 've got 'em about, as long as they 've got 'em."

While Sonya remarked in shocked tones: "She thinks socialists and anarchists are the same thing."

The time came to go. When Ambrose had paid the check he found that all his worldly goods now consisted of a much dimmed credit and one dollar and seventeen cents.

CHAPTER X

THE next day Ambrose had entirely forgotten his sad discovery of the night before until his Aunt Adelaide remarked at breakfast:

“Sonya has absolutely no clothes.”

“That ’s very true,” said Sonya, “and I should like some, Ambrose. And I want to go to school and I want music lessons. I want to learn to fence and then I want you to get me a chance to dance for Karovna, and see if she will give me lessons. She ’s going to pick out just ten people to teach, and then I want to eat an awful lot because I want to grow fat and beautiful. And every day I ’m going to work and every night I ’m going to bed early, and every day I ’m not going to make faces any more at friends in public

if you don't want me to." She smiled at him her lovely wide smile which was like a caress.

"But meantime we need clothes. She has n't anything warm," Aunt Adelaide complained.

"Go out," Ambrose said magnificently, "and get within reason anything you like, and have them sent home C. O. D."

As soon as they disappeared he sat down with his head in his hands. "I've not a practical nature," he thought, "but it is evident there 's going to be money needed." He took down the receiver and called up the magazine of which his friend Wainwright was editor, got the promise of a speedy check when he finished a story and betook himself to the typewriter. He noticed with pain that the dark surface was covered with a thick coating of dust. He applied himself with impassioned concentration.

He worked with earnestness the next week, getting up late and working into the night, and not once in that time did he find Camilla home. Toward the end of a week a messenger boy appeared at the door. It was a note from Camilla, whose affectation it was to send her notes by messengers since she refused to have a telephone, as she claimed one could have conversation in one's home or a telephone, but not both. The note said:

"I think I should tell you that while I love you and always shall, I 'm not in love with you, else I could n't feel such a fresh, springlike interest in another that I have learned to feel during your long absence. I know the cares of a family enthrall you and you may not be interested in this, but I thought it honorable to let you know.

"Sincerely,

"CAMILLA."

Ambrose seized the mallet and knocked upon the wall a signal: "I must see you at once." An affirmative knock answered his.

"Are you going to Camilla's and leave your story unfinished?" cried Sonya.

"Yes, Sonya," he replied with dignity.

"That was my intention."

"Don't go; don't go to her. Finish your story, Ambrose. Think of work and how short life is and how old you are. When I'm one minute late to school I feel as if I had wasted my whole life."

But Ambrose escaped down the stairs.

"Well, Camilla," he began, "how do you feel this evening about marrying me?"

"Is Sonya still your adopted daughter?"

"She is and she is likely to be."

Camilla changed the subject. "I have needed to see you for days," she said accusingly.

"You might have sent for me," Ambrose

suggested. "But I suppose it suited your temperament better to explode a bomb in my heart."

"I waited for you to come. I have to be run after. It's my early training."

"I ran," Ambrose assured her. "But you were never home."

"That is hardly my fault," Camilla replied guardedly. "It's for you, Ambrose, to come when I'm home—not for me to stay home until you come. If I can't have you when I want you, I may not want you at all. But it is not to discuss marriage that you are here. I have called upon you to put my life in order. I want you to balance my check book or weigh it or whatever needs doing."

"I've not come here to find your bank book wanting," Ambrose replied. "I want to hear about Askoff."

"Oh, yes, Askoff," said Camilla. "I want to be perfectly above board with you."

In your absence Sasha has been making hay. He boldly walks up and knocks on the door. You see, life is very difficult for me, Ambrose. I told you, oh, ever so long ago that I loved you. I love you still. I'm an ultimately faithful person. My affections never falter; but the trouble is, I'm also fond of Askoff. There's something very queer about Askoff, he flutters my heart. I'm afraid of him. There's something dark about Askoff that says—'No fooling.' Now, what do you think of it," she inquired, "as an impartial judge? About Askoff, I mean, and the strange way my heart beats over him, loving you all the time."

"I tell you what I think," Ambrose replied; "I think you'd better marry me first and then let your heart beat about Askoff afterward."

"Well, it would n't do any good to do that just now," Camilla responded, "not

if I want to keep you as a friend—because Askoff, you see, says he 'll kill you if I marry you."

"Oh," cried Ambrose with disgust, "is n't that just like a neurasthenic Pole! And, by gummy, he 'd be just enough of a *poseur* to do it! I tell you, Camilla, you 're playing with fire. But get a good honest husband first and flirt afterward, if you have n't got it out of your system."

"That 's just the trouble," said Camilla. "I shan't feel like flirting afterward. I should just feel like playing with you, Ambrose. You see, what I 'm afraid of is, that though I like to feel like a golden cloud floating irresponsibly in the sky—I 'm a cloud with a useful blue serge lining. Our early training sticks to us so that we have to get on like anything to get away from it. Now, let me tell you more about Askoff."

"You 've overdrawn," replied Ambrose, "three dollars and forty-two cents."

"There," cried Camilla, "now I'll have to work all night—or else go out with you and forget my worries! Come on, Ambrose, let's go out and forget our worries."

"And what about Askoff?" Ambrose wanted to know.

"Well, you see, it's mostly Askoff's fault that I have n't got my drawings in this month. He asked me to give him a day and I did. Once I had a man give me his life. I did n't want it, but he insisted it was mine. Nevertheless, he got married, and his wife gained seventy-nine pounds the first year—and it served him right. But few people have asked me to give them things, except, of course, my heart."

"So you gave Askoff a day," Ambrose said impatiently.

"Yes," said Camilla. "And the funniest thing about that day was that it was about the loveliest day of my life. There was only just one thing to mar it. I

thought once or twice, 'Why could n't Ambrose and I have a day like this? But then I forgot all about you afterward, Ambrose.'

"What did you do?" Ambrose asked. Gloom was beginning to fill his heart. "You seemed pretty serious about your day."

"Well, there is n't anything to tell. It was just a day made up of lovely nothings, and sunshine and wind and sand and harmony and beauty. We did n't do anything. We went to a beach and built a driftwood fire—that warm day, like summer, that we had last week. Then we found a funny little cheap place, had something to eat, and made up foolish stories and told each other, and I felt away—away from all my foolishness that I get so tired of sometimes and that I love so much, really—and my hair came down and I forgot how I looked. I could wear blue serge always if I felt the

way I did that day. You see, clothes and dresses are for me what cocktails are for men. When I am dressed the way I am, I just feel like living up to my part. I feel as if I were half actress and half princess, and quite drunk with life."

"Well, what about your day?" Ambrose reminded her.

"Well, then we came home, up here. We had some more things to eat—we had an awful lot to eat all day, too—I never was so hungry. Being happy makes one awfully hungry, you know. And then Sasha got his violin and played for me."

"Yes, I heard him," said Ambrose.

Camilla paused. "It does awfully odd things to my heart to have him play," she said as if speaking to herself.

"I don't want to interfere with your young life at all," Ambrose now informed her, "or spoil your joy—but I'd cut out Askoff—unless, of course, you want to be

the heroine of a tragedy instead of a comedy."

"He 's so different," Camilla remarked.

"He is different; he 's as different as a stick of dynamite."

"I never had a neurasthenic beau before," pleaded Camilla.

"You probably won't have again, or any other," Ambrose warned her, "if you go on the way you 're going."

"Lend me a penny," Camilla now asked him. "I 'm going to flip a penny to see if I 'm going to forget my sorrows, or if I 'm going to work all night."

"You 'd better flip a penny between me and Askoff, with heads I win and tails Askoff loses—before it 's too late," Ambrose advised her.

CHAPTER XI

THE tables were almost full when Camilla and Ambrose went in. The one waiter was an alert, hard-faced little man, who pocketed the contributions given to him probably never to disgorge them again. It could not have been for love or mere wages that he remained so late. And, as it was impossible for him to serve all the people, a friend of the proprietor's tended bar and gave him the money the following day. The Direct Actionists in the place helped themselves.

The theater was over and a group of hungry actors descended. They ordered steak by the square foot. The cook, at seeing them, brought out broilers, a broiler a person. He was a gaunt and gloomy individual, and at the sight of the Thespians

he pulled himself together like one who nerves himself for one supreme effort before an approaching collapse.

The appetites of the ladies of the company equaled those of the gentlemen. They quarreled hungrily as to who should have each ration of food. The cook began frying potatoes, not in the usual quantities, but by the bushel basket.

It was a wonderful and epic spectacle to see the hungry players eat. One went back to those fine old primitive days when food was the compelling passion, when man, after hunting, gorged and slept, and gorged again. Back to the days when man fought for his meat and when woman smiled upon the goriest hunter.

At last, the actors, replete, began to talk again. The cook, his last ounce of strength spent in brewing a mammoth pot of coffee, staggered to the door.

The restaurant, full as ever, was now left

entirely to the guests. The hunger of the players had been contagious. Every one wanted an egg sandwich.

A young man of agreeable and dignified aspect solemnly constructed one egg sandwich after another. There was nothing in his mien to make one think he had been drinking, except, possibly, a little sternness in his dignity—and the fact that he seemed unable to stop frying eggs. He fried them ceaselessly, solemnly, gravely, as though consummating a great life work. With a sacerdotal air he broke the egg into the pan. After a certain moment he flopped the egg in the air. From time to time he refreshed himself with drink, and after each drink he became more solemn and more coördinated. Great and inexpressible thoughts were in his mind. The frying of the egg had become to him some mighty symbol of the universe. As each egg was fried he put it between slices of

bread and handed it to the waiting throng with the air of one handing a key to the mystery of life.

There had been a slight shifting among the *habitués*. Siddell and Moriarity sat in one corner of the room, gazing moodily at Mary Dean, who was deep in conversation with John Trevelyan. They were oblivious to their surroundings, they did not see the Egg Frier, they were not aware of the players and their great feat worthy of Gargantua; they did not even hear a man who played Ornstein. They were as alone as in the fields of Elysium. Old birds, they were, too, to be love-making late at night, in this place—Mary, fresh as a hawthorne hedge and Trevelyan, the tan of out-doors dark upon him. In the midst of it they were aloof, absorbed. The others were but the painted phantoms of a fevered dream.

At last Camilla heard John Trevelyan

say, "It's time you went home, Mary. I'm going to take you there." They stopped on their way out before Camilla and Ambrose. "Mary and I are going to get married in the morning," Trevelyan announced.

Ambrose was in no temper to be congratulatory, for the worm of envy ate at his heart. "So, the little Village of Hasty Marriages got you, did it?" he jeered. "I thought you believed in free unions, Trevelyan?"

"I did," said Trevelyan, with a look in his eyes as of one who had never left Arcady. "But I tell you how it is, Ingraham, —fellows who are not in love have all kinds of batty theories. But when you care for a girl, little old City Hall is good enough for you. You can the each-one-goes-his-own-gait kind of talk, when you really care, don't you, Mary?"

Mary just smiled at him. "I wish you 'd

tell Tommy Moriarity for me," she said with the supreme and egotistic confidence of the bride.

"Certainly," replied Ambrose. "And is there anybody's else jugular you 'd like me to cut for you, as a wedding present? Any one on whom you 'd like me to commit mayhem, Mary, as a souvenir of your Bohemian days? I wish, Trevelyan, you 'd tell me how you got away with it. I tried to get a girl to marry me and all she did was to make a fool of me."

"I did n't do much," Trevelyan said. "I just told her she 'd got to, and she just happened to care for me—that's all, I guess."

From the next room came the heart-breaking sounds of a violin. "That's Sasha," said Camilla. "I think I 'd better talk to him."

"Oh, no, you won't," said Ambrose. "I have much tolerance, but I 'm not a supine

worm. I 'm going to take you home, now—myself, and then I 'm coming back to stick a knife into poor Tommy Moriarity's heart, which will undoubtedly keep me until morning."

As they left, the Egg Frier was still frying eggs—he had discovered a bushel basket of them under the table, intended for the Sunday morning breakfast—as though he were appointed by God to fry eggs through all eternity.

CHAPTER XII

A SILVERY mist enveloped the Square and turned it into an enchanted land, for of all places and spots in New York, there is none that can turn you such various faces at different hours of the day. At this dark of the night, after the clatter of the café, it seemed like the land of silver dreams, and like something, too, that had happened long ago, as though one had stepped backward into a more peaceful century.

“Camilla,” said Ambrose, “why can’t we be like Mary Dean and Trevelyan? Why don’t we just go and get married to-morrow? Why do we have to talk so much nonsense? My silly wagging tongue goes on talking nonsense when my heart beats

so I can't breathe. Why can't you be like Mary Dean?"

"I don't know why I can't," Camilla answered. "I want to, and I don't want to."

"Have n't I fulfilled your conditions? Don't you think I 'm a little kind?" Ambrose asked anxiously.

"Oh, I 'll take back everything I said about that!" cried Camilla, wilfully breaking in on his mood of tenderness. "You are kind, God knows—you 're worse than kind—you 've got a conscience. You let your conscience stand in the way of getting what you want. Now, Askoff—I like his look of cruelty—he 'd never let any one stand in his way. You would never be cruel."

Ambrose groaned. Rage flickered in his heart, and a desire for violence.

"The trouble with you, Ambrose, is that there 's no adventure about you for me,

while Askoff is a dark uncharted country."

"Oh, piffle!" cried Ambrose. "I can't stand talk like that. You want me to be kind, and now you want me to have no conscience. I shall bring you my conscience tomorrow morning. And as for being serious, the way you go on would make the lightest hearted person serious."

They walked on through the Square. The night was soft and warm. The silver mist wove enchantment around the familiar outlines of things. As of its own volition, as though it were acting without Camilla's knowledge, her hand sought Ambrose's. So for a moment they walked like children through an enchanted land, Camilla's little hand denying all the things she said, saying all the things she refused to put in words.

Suddenly Ambrose turned on her. "Camilla, come with me," he begged. "Come, before the foolish curtain of words cuts

us off from each other. Who knows why we talk as we do! When I talk to you my lightness murders the deep things I feel. I love you, Camilla. I want you with me. I want to take care of you. I pretend to take Askoff lightly—I want to—but I can't. I hate everything that comes between us. Camilla—come with me! Give up everything else and I will. Nothing but you matters to me. I've loved you since I looked out of the window that morning—and I've never loved people easily."

For a moment Camilla stood irresolute.

"Don't you love me?" he begged.

And Camilla cried again breathlessly, as she had before:

"Yes—yes! I love you—but I don't want to begin, quite yet, the serious things. Life's been so serious for me. I want to play for a little while. I've never had my playtime."

"We'd play when we were married."

“Not as much—not the same way.” Suddenly she put her face up to his and kissed him. “Dear Ambrose—let me be—for just a moment. Leave your door open, and one day I ’ll come walking in.”

CHAPTER XIII

TOMMY MORIARITY'S broken heart kept Ambrose occupied until morning. He thought it best not to disturb his own family by his untimely entrance and went back to Tommy and Siddell's rooms, where they all slept until eleven. It was noon before Ambrose, having had coffee and a shave, arrived jauntily home. His aunt met him with a gloomy countenance.

"Why, what 's the matter?" he cried.

"Sonya left!" she answered.

"Left," said Ambrose. "Left where?"

"I don't know," his aunt replied. "I only know she went in a rage. I never heard anybody slam around so. She left this note for you."

It read: "Ambrose, I 'll not stay with lazy people who run after girls who don't

care for them, who stay out all night, who never work.

"Good-by, Sonya. Don't try to find me."

"Now what do you think of that?" he inquired.

"I think it's that awful maternal instinct run riot again," she said. "Sonya's furious because she can't put you to bed and rock you to sleep."

A little gay hope sprung up in Ambrose's heart. It was just possible that God had been good and that Sonya had found a nice home.

Mrs. Babcock's candid and humorous face was troubled.

"If she don't come back, you don't need me," she told her nephew, "and I shall go back to Carthage. It's no use, Ambrose, your saying that you want me to stay, because I sha'n't. I know just how much a young man like you needs an aunt."

At that moment Ambrose's bright little hope was killed by Yolande who flew past him and perched on the chiffonier with a tail like a fox's brush.

"Sonya 's back!" he thought. He went into the studio. Sonya was sitting on the floor pretending to be Yolande making an elaborate toilette. She could draw her little face up until she looked like a stern kitten. With feline gestures, she stalked Yolande and spat at him as though she were another cat, until terrified and furious, his fur on end, that dignified animal flew through the air.

She now arose and flung herself upon Ambrose and wound both arms and legs around him.

"O Ambrose," she cried; I 'm so glad to be back."

"So am I," said Ambrose, hugging her.

Sonya now catapulted herself upon Mrs. Babcock.

"I feel as if I 'd been gone months instead of a morning because I 've done so much. I could n't stay away," she said. "Besides I went to be tried out by Karovna, and she 's going to take me on. I 'm going to be one of Karovna's pupils, do you hear? How much work have you done, Ambrose, while I was doing this?"

"Home again," cried Ambrose, "my walking conscience!"

"The mother rampant," Aunt Adelaide supplemented.

"It 's more than I can bear," said Ambrose, taking up Yolande from his perch and reaching for his hat.

"Where are you going?" Sonya called after him.

"To drown myself," said Ambrose sourly. "'Infuriated by super-child, master and cat seek watery grave.' That 's what you 'll see in this evening's paper, Sonya."

Sonya struck a pose of total despair.

"Look, this is how you feel," she said. She danced slowly around the room. It was despair without dignity that she danced; anguish that had not the excuse of tragedy.

"Sonya, you rejuvenate my heart," said Ambrose, "and at the same time you make me want to batter out my brains against the wall."

Swiftly he escaped and climbed Camilla's stairs.

"See, Camilla," he said, "every morn I bring you violets. Take this little floral tribute." He presented her with Yolande. He looked at her anxiously, watching for a trace of the mood of last night.

"No, you don't," said Camilla. "It's Askoff that brings me violets every morning, or nearly every." She was calm and composed. She ignored the moment of understanding love.

There was nothing for him to do but respect the intangible barrier she had put between them. After a silence Ambrose said gloomily:

"He must have had a wave of good fortune; he must have forged a check or something; however, take this cat. I can't have two consciences in the house. I've come to the conclusion that that's the matter with me—too much conscience, and hiding my feelings behind conventional and flip-pant speech."

"I don't think I want a conscience," Camilla objected.

"Well, he won't be your conscience," said Ambrose. "He'll only be your cat."

He rose to go. At the door he turned.

"Camilla!" he implored.

"Time. Ambrose!" she begged.

He went away with a feeling of impending disaster.

CHAPTER XIV

AMBROSE was now forced to go to work in earnest. The need for money pressed him sorely. He tried to bully editorial offices. They remained obdurate. His friend Wainwright requested him to get busy.

"Why don't you move?" he asked. "How can you work in that confounded place you live in? No one works down there. They just live by piracy. I don't like such people, anyway—they don't wash enough."

Ambrose went forth upon the street to the houses of his friends. When he asked Moriarity for a loan of twenty-five dollars, Moriarity inquired bitterly if he had been snuffing the snow. Finally, from one source and another he managed to scrape

together money for Sonya's dancing dress.

He worked along for several weeks with indifferent success. For the first time in his life Ambrose found himself worried. The cares of a family, and a thwarted love affair, and a fancy temperament like Ambrose's had not been conducive to his best work. The rent was due; so were Augusta's wages; so were lots and lots of other things. And as he sat working, instead of his mind being on his story, figures walked before his eyes. His thoughts wandered from his hero to a contemplation of his unpaid bills. They alternated with the vision of Camilla's little head with a fantastic crown of red hair.

It must be admitted that Camilla did nothing to help Ambrose during these weeks. Indeed, she devoted herself to that fantastic occupation known as blowing hot and cold.

On an afternoon dressed in a costume

which caused 'Gusta to remark: "Law, Miss Camilla, the Lord ain't slighted you in no partic'lar!" Camilla made up her mind that she had been neglecting Mrs. Babcock.

It was Sonya who opened the door, remarking sourly:

"Oh, you 've come for Ambrose, have you?"

"I 've come to see *Mrs. Babcock*," Camilla replied, with dignity.

"They 're both in," Sonya remarked, skepticism in every outline. She was in her dancing dress. Lately she had worked hard, and promised to be among those whom Karovna would choose to take to Paris with her.

"Sonya," said Camilla, after a while, "why don't you like me?"

"Because you walk on Ambrose," Sonya replied, swaying like a flower on its stalk.
"Because you have no heart. I know how

women act who have. They don't behave as if men were cakes—first take a bite of one and then a bite of another. No! They love their *own* men. They go out and fight for them, or, if they see they can't have them, they give them up. Do you know what I'd do if I couldn't have the man I loved—I'd take a sharp sword and cut out my heart." She stood before Ambrose and stamped her foot.

"That, you see, is her advice to me," said Ambrose.

"Yes, it is," said Sonya. She turned on Camilla. "Why do you come here to see Ambrose?" she cried. "You hurt his work. What do you care for his work? I hate women like you! Why don't you come for good or stay away? It's your fault that he can't work. He can't write or think anything good. You make me think of a gypsy poem my grandfather used to say:

"You desire my love, yet you don't love me:
From my unfulfilled desires you builded your own
prison."

Ambrose laughed. "You see what you get. Maybe another time you won't be so hasty about asking Sonya why she does n't like you. Everything she says is true. You see, Sonya," he went on, "Camilla does n't want to eat her cake and have it, too; she wants to keep her cake and not have it grow stale."

"I had a reason," Camilla said, with dignity, "beyond idle curiosity in asking Sonya why she hated me. I really should have asked her how much she hated me. Do you hate me too much, Sonya, to dance at a party I am giving this week?"

"O no," said Sonya promptly. "Will there be uptown people there that it will be good for me to dance before? I love to dance for new people."

"Yes," said Camilla. "Will you let me

give you a gold and canary dress? I'm going to have all my decorations yellow, and you 'll look wonderful, Sonya, dancing there."

CHAPTER XV

ALMOST all unpleasant aspects of the Village can be blamed on uptown New York. One might say that all that ailed the Village was Broadway. Uptowners visit it with the same open-minded integrity of purpose with which the new-made millionaire visits the Great White Way. They go for thrills and shocks, and go back to their cabarets and roof gardens bitter that the Village has shown them so little, and cherishing deeply every opportunity for disapproval so that they may feel that they have not gone villaging in vain.

Those who live around the Square are always on the defensive with their uptown friends.

Camilla's had long been urging her to move. This was why she had planned a party of utmost originality where beauty and decorum should mingle fraternally.

She had asked Clara Pomfret and her other friends, intent on showing them what it was that bound her to the Square, translated into terms which they could understand.

The party began after the manner of teas, a deserted and decorated room that gave the effect of being prepared elaborately for something which could never happen. Then guests arrived, at first like stray spring flowers—until the party burst into bloom. Sonya alone hadn't come; Aunt Adelaide and Ambrose had left her dressing. The afternoon wore on and still no Sonya. Askoff played. There was need for further diversion when she drifted in like a golden leaf borne by the wind. She stood poised, as though about to dance,

when a resounding knock came on the door. Two little boys stood there with bird cages in their hands.

“How sweet!” Camilla said. “Canaries are exactly what we need. I’ll buy them. I’m sure I don’t know for whom they are intended, but I need canaries. Some thoughtful person must have ordered them.”

An old woman appeared. She also carried two canaries. These also Camilla paid for. Sonya had disappeared. She was giving refreshments to the little boys and the old woman.

The old woman was followed by a furtive-eyed old man. He had six canaries. Ambrose paid for these.

Canary venders now filled the staircase—smart young delivery men from the department stores, old women and children from the East Side bird shops. The dark stairways were full of the noise of the

chirping of birds. It seemed as though all the canaries in New York, with one concerted desire, had come to the party. They pushed and crowded their way in in spite of Ambrose. Word had gone abroad among the bird-shop people that some of the birds were paid for, and all the others refused to go. They told their stories in staccato tones. There were those who had come even from Brooklyn. Camilla then gave the canaries as favors.

Guests who had no canaries clamored for them. Venders who had not been paid clamored for their money. There was pandemonium.

"What shall I do?" Camilla whispered to Ambrose.

"Buy them all," said Ambrose. "Buy them all and get rid of the people. Take it as a joke."

"That 's the only thing to do," said Camilla. "They 'll break up the party if I

don't. Ambrose, where will we get the money?"

"I've sold a story," said Ambrose grimly. "I'll pay for them."

"I can't let you do that," cried Camilla.

"Why not?" said Ambrose bitterly. "There's only one brain in the world responsible. There's only one person who would show her hatred of another by sending a hundred canary birds C. O. D."

"You don't suppose—" Camilla said.

"No," said Ambrose. "I don't suppose. I *know*."

A spirit of high levity had come over the guests. After the sensitive fashion of those who dwell around the Square, Camilla had tried to impress her uptown friends that she lived a life of dignity and propriety. She had staged the party for that effect. But there was no party that could withstand a hundred canaries brought in apparently by the children of Lazarus.

Ordinary speech became impossible, for one after another of the canaries burst into song. Floor, divans and chairs were littered with bird-cages.

Camilla's party had become a rout.

In the midst of this two young men began to play and Sonya danced. She danced not the classic and beautiful things that she had learned from Karovna. She danced an indecorous dance invented by her in former days, a dance entitled "Le Pied du Nez." It was a dance full of derision and mockery, a dance of defiance, a dance in which not one single decorous gesture existed, founded as it was upon the classic gesture indicated by the title of the dance. The polite uptown gentlemen twisted with laughter; the old ladies smiled pained smiles and found it time to go. Between ribaldry and embarrassment the party broke up, Sonya bidding one and all good-night, her thumb delicately planted

upon her nose, her fingers waving in the air, while Camilla's reputation for living a fantastic and bohemian existence was established forever.

The final guest had departed. Sonya vanished, leaving Camilla and Ambrose together. About them in the wreckage sang innumerable canaries. The room had the expression of a human derelict with whom the riot of life is finished.

A desolate mound of tea things lay on the tea-table. Wherever the eye fell it rested on a half-empty punch glass. Here and there lamentable little cakes had been trodden into the carpet, while on the floor, even on the lap of the golden Buddha, were canaries. They sang and caroled deafeningly in many different keys. Their piercing and hideously sweet song filled the air; the flicker of their restless, hopping bodies disturbed the vision.

Among these ruins sat Camilla and Am-

brose. Camilla was thrown face downward on the couch, her fingers in her ears. They were both penniless, and ruined beyond repair. In the deafening noise spoke Camilla:

"It 's all your fault," said she, "for letting me buy those first canaries."

"My fault?" cried Ambrose.

"If you 'd sent the first ones away, we 'd have sent the second," cried Camilla sharply. "Look at them! Look what they 've done! It 's your fault for having adopted Sonya in the beginning."

"See here, Camilla," said Ambrose, "I 've known a great many things about your character, but I 've never known before that you were a short sport."

"Short sport!" said Camilla. "Short sport because I object to fifty thousand canaries being foisted on me by your adopted child. I 'd rather be a short sport than a poseur like yourself."

"Poseur!"

"What else is Sonya but a pose—a pose of yours!"

They talked loudly above the shrilling canaries. You can see that they had laid a fine foundation for a quarrel. Upon this foundation they raised a splendid edifice. They built swiftly and rapidly and within a half hour it arrived at a point where people part forever. Neither of them used restraint.

As Ambrose left, Camilla called after him: "I wish you 'd take your disgusting birds to your horrid child."

Askoff came that evening and he had never seemed so pleasant to her. He played for her and was in one of his charming moods, like a wild and wilful little boy. He played for her until she forgot all about canaries and indecorous parties.

Suddenly he threw down his violin and cried:

“Come, Camilla, let me open the door of life for you. How can you stand these people—men like Ingraham and the others? What do they know about life? You know how they ’re going to live—they will do over and over what they are doing now. Come with me and live and love and suffer.”

This is old stuff, but the beauty with old stuff is that it hits the human heart amidships. If it did n’t, it would never live to be old stuff, and there are always young people who hear it for the first time. Camilla was young. The old stuff knocked at her heart.

CHAPTER XVI

FOR the first time Ambrose was seriously angry with Sonya. She received his anger with flippancy.

"I don't mind working for you," he finally told her. "But when it comes to paying for nearly a hundred damn canary birds, it 's a little too much of a good thing. Of course, we can sell them back but we can't get half what we paid for them."

"Did *you* have to pay for them?" asked Sonya.

"Who do you suppose would?" said Ambrose. "Do you suppose I 'd let Camilla shoulder your foolishness? God, what a mind! A hundred canary birds C. O. D., and from almost as many different places! What an intellect!" So saying he took his departure. He saw little of Sonya the

next few days, for at that time ambition decreed that she go to night school.

Ambrose found himself at loose ends. He had quarreled with Camilla; Sonya was not there. He amused himself by taking his Aunt Adelaide to roof-gardens and uptown places. This good lady, having no conventional standards, found these places shocking after the decorum of the village.

One day Ambrose went forth into the Square to seek consolation. In the back room of a saloon he found a hobo who reproached him for living a life of dissipation. He fled to a near-by tea-room where an art student in a smock and tam-o'-shanter told him that the trouble with him was that he lived a conventional life and knew uptown people. He went to the cellar of the Brevoort where an anarchist informed him that he was a damn bourgeois.

"This," thought Ambrose, "has got to stop. I've stood all I can." He thought

of going uptown, but since the affair of the canaries, uptown was closed to him, since he had been accustomed to laugh rather than be laughed at. "If I go home, there 'll be Aunt Adelaide, bless her, and I can hear that confounded Pole playing on his fiddle to Camilla next door." So he betook himself over to Second Avenue and dropped in by chance on a small Hungarian cabaret.

About him fat Hungarians sat and smoked. A foreign-looking young man with a Mongolian countenance played the Hungarian piano. Then two girls sang ragtime. Ambrose had all the sensations of one traveling in foreign countries.

He wanted to think, and what he wanted to think about was how a new home could be found for Sonya Mucha. This was an extraordinarily hard problem. The world was full of people with whom Sonya would not live, and an almost equal number of

people who would not have Sonya live with them. In fact, as he continued to think, it narrowed itself down to himself. And since the canaries a deep sense of insecurity had invaded Ambrose.

Suddenly into his range of vision flashed a little scarlet-robed figure.

It was Sonya!

He had seen her practise the same dance only the day before. The curious part of it to him was that she seemed singularly one with the place and at ease. A sudden fury now mounted in Ambrose.

"She certainly is crowding the mourners," was the phrase that rose to his mind. It seemed a little too much to him that Sonya's individuality should be expressing itself in these terms after the canaries. It was with dignity that Ambrose approached the proprietor, a florid, stout man, with shaggy eyebrows and a mustache like a black lambrequin.

"This young lady's engagement," Ambrose informed him with an elegant uptown accent, "terminates tonight!"

Insolently the proprietor stared at him and let fall these humiliating words:

"Beat it! Go on out from here and don't let me see you speak to Sonya Mucha!" Ambrose realized that in a situation which demanded the egregious tact of the defunct Van Bibber, he had bungled the whole affair. He, serene and superior, after having quelled the proprietor, should have led forth the sobered Sonya. Instead he lost his temper.

"I'm the guardian of that child," he said. "She's coming with me."

"Guardian—hell!" responded the proprietor. "You're a swell guardian!" His eloquent gaze traveled insultingly over Ambrose's person. "Get out!" he added.

At this Ambrose's temper left him abruptly. How it happened Ambrose

never knew. He vaguely remembered hitting out at the proprietor while some one attacked from the rear, and Sonya bore down upon them all like an avenging flame, crying:

"Stop—Gasterl—stop! That 's my Ambrose! Don't hurt my Ambrose!"

Peace was restored. The two men eyed each other. The proprietor mopped his brow. Ambrose strove to arrange his shattered collar, while Sonya complicated the situation by hurling herself on his neck, crying:

"Oh, Ambrose, are you hurt?"

Then rage rose in her heart and she stormed alternately at the proprietor and Ambrose.

Slowly the proprietor got under way; puffing and winded he got a glass of water which he threw at her. Sonya gasped, and sat down shivering. After a moment she looked up smiling at Ambrose.

"You see *he* knew what to do—he 's a friend of grandpa's," she confided.

They left together, the proprietor still suspicious, still solicitous of Sonya's welfare, still asking if after all he had n't "better call a bull."

In the back of Ambrose's mind the desire for dignity still lurked. He wanted to ask Sonya in icy tones what this meant, but as Sonya remarked, "Caught with the goods!" it was hard to pull what he knew she would term "up-stage stuff."

"Ambrose," she said, "don't be mad. I knew we needed some money so I got fifteen dollars last week for dancing there, and bought all our food with it and something besides." She beamed at him with an expression of one who expects the words: "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

"Oh, Sonya," he cried, "you're a brick!"

Embarrassingly she threw her arms around him.

"I knew you would n't like it," she said. "You've got such queer narrow ideas, so I just said I was going to night school. But I can't bear women who won't get out and hustle for their men when there is n't any money! Parasites!"

"Well, you don't need to hustle any more," he answered. A curious little choky feeling had come in his throat. All thoughts of finding a new home for Sonya had vanished forever. "Sonya," he said, "you ought n't to do things like this—a kid like you in a place like that! Anything might have happened."

She looked at him with the expression of a terribly knowing guttersnipe. "I'd like to see any one get gay with *me!*" she remarked. "Besides, the old Hungarian who keeps the joint knew my grandpa, I tell you!"

Side by side they walked home, Sonya engaging and gay; but he felt enclosed. He had always felt this *ménage* to be a temporary thing, something that might vanish as it had come. Then he saw that there were circles under Sonya's eyes, and that beneath her surface of gaiety she was tired; and he realized that she was tired because she had been using the last ounce of her strength for him. Suddenly he had a vision of what it meant to a little girl who was already working from morning until night to go out again and dance in a hideous little cabaret.

A feeling of affection for Sonya flooded him, and of contempt for himself, since while she had been working to the last ounce of her strength for him, he had been thinking of how to get rid of her. Gratitude and obligation now forever closed the door between him and escape. He felt as elderly as any parent, deeply touched, but

suddenly brought face to face with the reality of the situation.

Next day Ambrose sold a story. He celebrated by taking his Aunt and Sonya to the opera. It was when coming home with the tickets that he ran into Camilla. She smiled at him and at once tendered the olive branch.

"Take me out to dinner tonight," she said. Every day that had passed since last she had seen Ambrose had made her feel more kindly toward him. Especially was this so since she had not seen Askoff for the past several days. After inviting her out to the larger spaces of life, he had suddenly vanished.

"Oh, Camilla," Ambrose said, "why did n't you ask me any other time? I have to take Sonya to the opera tonight."

Camilla grew cold. "Are you chained to the nursery?" she inquired.

He hastened to explain the story of the

cabaret and his obligation and gratitude. The story proved unconvincing to Camilla.

"She was having a grand time doing it," was her verdict.

They parted; the gulf between them deepened.

When Camilla arrived home she found a small Italian boy waiting for her. He held out a piece of paper. On it in faltering handwriting was written Camilla's name and address. The boy explained in the dialect of Italian Bleecker Street that Askoff had been badly hurt, that he had been run over and had his right arm and leg broken, and he begged that Camilla would come to him. She followed the Italian boy down one street and up another to a house that was in the very heart of Sinister Street itself. They went up ill-smelling flights of stairs.

"Here it is," said the little boy, and threw open the door.

The room was a caricature of a working-girl's room. Meagerness in every form was known to Camilla, but squalor was new to her. She longed to turn from it and run. Askoff, lying haggard and bandaged on the bed, filled her with both pity and horror, with love and disgust.

At sight of her, "Camilla," he whispered. "I went down to the gates of death, Camilla, with the thought of you in my heart—and the thought of you made me come back. I feel as if I had been searching for you forever and now you've come."

Although his words were those of a movie hero, there was an intensity in his voice, a curious ring which meant that for him her love was now a matter of life or death. It was an affection that seemed to her bigger than either one of them, a love that seemed to have its own separate existence and that now engulfed them both within it as the darkness of the night.

She wanted to fly from it; she wanted to tell him that there was no place in her life large enough to put a devouring love of that sort. He looked singularly younger lying there; his hair like a black bird's wing sweeping off his pale forehead and his sunken eyes gave him the air of a young boy.

"You 're going to stay, Camilla," he said.

"Of course," she answered.

"You 're going to stay always with me, aren't you now?"

"As long as you need me."

"Oh, Camilla!" he cried. "Come near me!"

At the sound of his voice, tears crowded to Camilla's eyes. She bent over and kissed him. He lay very quiet with the look on his face of a person who sees a miracle. And again in Camilla's heart there came a feeling of inadequacy as of

one who receives a precious gift that one does n't know quite what to do with.

"Camilla," he said, "will you give me my chance now, my little chance to make you love me? Give me just that little time; give me as good a chance as other people have." He was using his weakness to press his point. He played according to no rules of the game, but took his advantage where he might. "Will you, Camilla?" he begged very gently, very humbly, holding her hand in his as if it was something fragile and precious.

"Of course," she answered again.

"You mean it, Camilla? You're not humoring me because I'm sick?"

"Of course I mean it," she answered.

He touched her infinitely, as he did always. But she felt, as she had so often before, a desire to escape, as though something dark and sinister were waiting for her that was mingled with his love.

"Who's been taking care of you, Sasha?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered. "A district nurse has been in and the neighbors, too. They tried to get me to go to the hospital. . . . I would n't go!" he flamed at her.

"No, of course not." She smoothed his head with her hand.

"I hate institutions and I could n't talk to you. It happened I was n't knocked senseless. I made them carry me here. Where are you going?"

Camilla had risen. "I've got to make you more comfortable. You've got to have the things you need."

"Don't go!" he begged her. "For my sake you'll come back?" His accent was heartbreaking, like a child begging for its mother.

"Of course," she promised.

She found the Italian boy and bought

various things that would help him to be more comfortable. She engaged a neighbor to look after Sasha at intervals until he could be moved to a better place. And while she was doing this one insistent thought beat in her mind. How had Sasha, living as he did, been able to bring her violets? He must have gone without meals; he must have spent whatever little he made, beggared himself for a whim. Taking her to dinner must have been to him starvation.

She went back to his room and began to put it in order. From the pocket of a coat some cards fell. She picked them up and put them back and looked guiltily over toward Sasha, but he was lying with his eyes closed.

The little cards were pawn tickets!

CHAPTER XVII

THE wind of chance had taken Camilla of the Golden Wings and the Blue Serge Past, and Askoff, the Wandering Flame, and blown them together. It blew Camilla into Sinister Street, set her hand upon Askoff's coat and let the pawn tickets drip at her feet like blood. At the sight of them Camilla's heart had melted. She did n't think of herself any more. She thought only of Sasha and his tragic sacrifices; Sasha, who to please her, to be a moment with her, would starve himself in his cold and barren room. And there he lay, his right arm, by which he made his living, disabled and helpless, no one in the world to look after him but herself.

Sasha was a solitary. He had few friends; he took no part in the wassails of

the Square. He had no uncertain and intermediate moods. His gaiety carried along every one with him, or else he lived plunged in darkness. Now that Camilla had come in, it seemed as though he had thrown away all care and all unhappiness forever. He didn't mind his broken arm. He seemed oblivious of the fact that his livelihood was taken away from him. His attic was a paradise; it was a garden.

Camilla went home not sure what she had promised him. The emotions of the day had lifted her up to a great height, and then left her stranded on a desolate shore, incapable of thinking or feeling much. She found Yolande sitting gray and distant before the fire, the embodiment of a dark conscience.

"Yolande," Camilla said, "if I put a marigold in your collar, would you take it back to your master?" A tear splashed on

her hand as she said it. It seemed to her that this episode had happened a very long time ago, and that all the swift, flashing gaiety of life was gone.

She felt when she went to Sasha next day as if she was going to some strange adventure in a far country—as if at last she was going into that uncharted land which was Sasha's, of which she had spoken to Ambrose. At the same time she felt a deep responsibility toward his love. She went with a curious beating of her heart, wondering what it would mean. On her way she bought various things for his comfort, which made her rather late.

The day before, Sasha had been a prism which shattered the ordinary happenings of life into a thousand gay notes of color. Today he was dark; all the sorrows of Poland seemed concentrated in the gaze which he bent upon her. This filled her with impatience. The New England

phrase: "For heaven's sake, don't glom-mer like that!" came into her mind, but she checked herself. "Good morning, Sasha, dear," she said. "How do you feel?"

"Good morning," he answered, his brooding gaze upon her.

"Don't you feel well?" she asked him, putting her hand on his head.

"Why should I?" he answered.

"Poor Sasha, are you worse?" she asked in a voice filled with tenderness.

"You saw Ingraham yesterday," he accused.

A curious feeling of love and pity flooded Camilla. The nakedness with which he showed his weakness and his love wrung her heart, and for a treacherous moment she compared Sasha's desperate love with Ambrose's. Ambrose surrounded her with an atmosphere of tenderness and devotion—he loved her—but he had refused to

go to dinner with her when she wanted to—how much she hated to admit to herself.

Sasha was undivided in his love and concentrated. He wanted one thing and only one in life and to attain that he would have brushed all small obligations aside like cobwebs. It was a powerful appeal.

This all flashed like sudden light through Camilla's heart before she answered:

"No, I have n't seen Ambrose. I hardly ever see him now."

"Oh, Camilla!" It was as if she had told him the kingdom of heaven was at hand. "Forgive me. I can't help being jealous; I'm always jealous. When I can fight for myself I don't mind the fortunes of war, but the torment of lying here, when he has everything on his side—Camilla, you don't know what it is to lie still, with your heart burning a hole in you, hour after hour!"

"No," said Camilla humbly, "I don't."

"Are you going to see him today?" he asked.

"No, I 'm not," suddenly she decided. "I 'm not going to see him again for a long time."

"Do you mean it?" he cried.

"Yes—yes, I mean it."

"Oh, Camilla, I wish I could play to you what I feel! I 'd play something so gay, Camilla. But I don't care if I never play again, as long as you 're with me. You swear you have given him up?" He cast a dark look of suspicion at her.

"Yes, I swear."

"What if you should meet him on the street?"

"Why, then, I 'd say how do you do, and go on."

"You would n't stop to talk, while I 'm lying here sick?"

"No, no!" she cried. "Be at rest,

Sasha—don't let's talk about it. I shall go if you talk like this any more."

He caught her hand. "I'll be good," he promised.

By wounding and alienating Ambrose she was able to keep her promise to Sasha. But this helped little. When she was n't with him, jealousy devoured him.

There are some people who, in love, are a profession in themselves. Askoff was one of these. He pervaded Camilla's life. His curious fingers wanted to pry in all the secret places of her soul. He wanted every thought of her mind, every beat of her heart; and in turn, he was rewarding and lovely, or dark and awful.

Sasha's strangeness, his restless love for her, her feeling of obligation to him, the very peril she felt in his intense and smouldering affection, absorbed the hours of her life.

It was not, Camilla was conscious, as

though he were supplanting Ambrose, but as though he were shutting her away from him, as though her love for Ambrose went on living its happy existence somewhere else where Camilla could not see it.

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE are various ways of killing a romantic attachment. One of them goes like this: "Where were you when you were away from me? With whom were you? What are you thinking of? You do not love me today as you did yesterday. Why are you sad—is it because you are with me? You are late—what made you late? You do not love me today as you did yesterday. You have never loved me. What are you thinking of?" This was Askoff's method.

Camilla made one concession after another, and to avoid scenes finally brought her work to Sasha's room. But work didn't go; it seemed that in his presence all her gay-hearted phantasies had fled.

With the citadel of herself so invaded she found she could n't work.

In some way in which she could n't place she had turned back the hand of time. She knew that somewhere, some time, she had already felt these emotions—the same deep affection, the desire for service, the same obligation, and the same weariness.

Then one day as she sat beside Sasha and listened for the twentieth time to his suspicions and appeased them for the twentieth time she knew why this scene was the most familiar thing in the world. It was the very fabric of her drab childhood.

In spite of Askoff's dark and foreign personality, in spite of the squalor of his attic, he reproduced her father's querulous jealous affection which had poisoned the air about him as he had lain sick, but which had made those near him the slaves of his weakness. As obligation had held her so long to her father, as love had held her

so long, so it now chained her to Sasha.

She laughed aloud. A vision came to her of sitting in a buggy, driving her white horse, to find her mother at the door calling sharply: "Where have you been? Your father's waiting for you."

Camilla's blue serge past had found her out, and her heart was again hung in a gray flannel bag on the garret stairs. Yet for her there was no escape. Askoff was penniless, and because of her. Her chivalry bound her to him.

There were two things of which Camilla was sure. One was that she had to see Sasha through this; the other was that she must put an end to his suspicions. "Sasha," she said, "there are some old friends of my mother's down on Long Island who have always asked me to go down and board with them. I'm sure they'd take you in, too. Why don't we go down there? I could work down there, and that

would put an end to all this weary talk about Ambrose. I'm so tired of us all three that I frequently wish we had all died when teething."

Sasha agreed to this eagerly. His mood changed and with it his whole personality in a way that had always until now held magic for Camilla. Today it left her cold. She wanted only quiet.

"I have had an offer for my studio for a couple of months. I think I'll take it," she told him, and, inexpressibly depressed, went home where she did some sketchy packing, then suddenly she knew she could not go away without seeing Ambrose.

"My life had a blue serge lining after all, Ambrose," she wrote, "so I'm going away for a while. If you want to see me come tonight."

She sent the note by messenger and sat down to wait for him. Through her open window she could faintly hear his piano.

She knew he was home. She sat there and waited. Twice the stairs creaked and there came a knock on her door. Once it was the laundry and the second knock was the messenger from the office who brought back her last set of drawings, with a cautiously worded note which informed her that she seemed to have lost her early spontaneity, and would she please call at the office.

"Spontaneity," she thought. "How can one have spontaneity with some one growling at one all day? How can you have spontaneity when you are living some one else's moods forever and can't get away? Oh, horrible sense of responsibility—oh, awful early training!"

Ambrose, she felt, and Ambrose alone, could help her out of this difficulty. But Ambrose did n't come.

He did n't come for the reason that Sonya, who had received the note, without hesitation—being bound by no foolish con-

ventions—had read it, and without hesitation, had flung it into the grate, remarking cheerfully: "*That for you!*"

The next day, Ambrose, looking out of the window, saw a furniture van drawing up in front of the house next door. From it a man emerged carrying a gold Buddha; the van swallowed it, and it was gone. This seemed to him to bode evil. He ran downstairs two at a time and found Camilla's janitress standing at the door.

"Is Miss Deerfield moving?" he asked anxiously.

"No, sor; I think she's gone to the country."

"Where to?" asked Ambrose.

"I don't know, sor," replied the janitress, who had seen too many lovers to love them any longer.

"The folks she's let the studio to," she volunteered, "sed heathen idols settin' round made them nervous, small blame to

them, so Miss Camilla sent the god up to storage. She 's gone, and she 's taken the cat with her."

By nightfall gossips of the Square had brought word to him that Camilla had gone off with Askoff.

Since Camilla had not told her affairs to every one all sorts of versions filled the air. She had found Askoff lying ill and they had been married forthwith; she had found him ill and had not married him forthwith. They had gone away to get married; they had not gone away to get married. The Village likes to know everything, and when it is n't informed frankly by the actors in a given romance exactly what is happening, it revenges itself by its fantastic imaginings. The important thing was that Camilla was no longer there, and that she had left without the kindness of a word.

It seemed to Ambrose that with Ca-

milla's going gaiety left the Square. There was no one so happy as Camilla, there was no one who always seemed so glad to see you, no one who agreed so cheerfully to any plan you might make.

"Oh, Sonya," he thought to himself, "why did you choose me to live with, and since you chose me, why did you bind me to you by going out to hustle for me? Why should I have had to remain true to you that night, the last time Camilla asked anything of me?" There was nothing for him now but to try and put her away from his heart, to absorb himself in his work, to amuse himself with Sonya.

CHAPTER XIX

THERE was no forgetting Camilla for Ambrose. That she had deserted him meant nothing. He loved her—life seemed worthless without her. He would wake up in the middle of the night with Camilla's face before him, wondering:

“Where are you, Camilla? Are you happy?”

His work refused to go. One day he left his machine and went to look for amusement. Sonya was practising a gesture and three or four little running steps. The little dance was as gay as a leaf in the wind-blown autumn.

“Sonya,” he asked, “when you close your eyes do you ever have to see somebody's face you don't want to?” She paused and smiled at him and shook her head.

"I go to sleep when I close my eyes," she answered.

"When you are working do you ever get absent-minded and dream conversations with some one else and make them come out as you 'd like to have them?"

"Sometimes I sit and dream that Karovna chose me among the three to go abroad with her," she said. "When I dream that I get up and go to work."

"You were never in love then, I take it."

"In love!" cried Sonya. "In love! I should say not! I don't believe in love!"

"You believe in loving, don't you?"

"O yes; loving is life. But being in love—it's death."

"I'll bet a hat you did n't make that up! I'll bet a hat your grandfather did!" said Ambrose with skepticism.

"Romantic love is the curse of our times," said Sonya, bounding across the

room with the lightness of a wild animal.

"You talk like a green apple," said Ambrose discontentedly. "You'll never be an artist if you've never been in love. Before you possibly can be an artist you'll have to suffer."

"O well, if it would help my work," Sonya conceded. "But when you were in love it did n't do you any good—you're not in love any more, are you, Ambrose?"

"Certainly not," Ambrose replied with dignity. Then he stopped to stare at Sonya. Before she had come to him she had been like a plant kept away from the light, now she seemed from one moment to another to have burst into bloom. At his look she ran to the big mirror.

"Ambrose," she said, "Tia must have been right. She always said I was older than grandfather thought. I think I'm sixteen or seventeen, instead of fourteen or fifteen. Just look at me."

"I see you," said Ambrose. She had a flashing, elusive beauty that set one's heart beating.

"Ambrose," said Sonya, "do you know what's going to happen this afternoon? I'm going to win and Karovna will take me to Paris. I've—I've been so afraid about it I've kept my fingers crossed but now I'm sure."

"Why's that?" he asked.

"Oh, I know—I know. You know how it is when you've done well. Something in your heart goes—*ding!* and you know you've hit the bull's-eye. That happened to me just now. I could tell by the way you looked at me—and the *sure* way I felt when I was dancing."

Ambrose's heart contracted curiously. "Are you sure you'll win?" he asked. He imagined his life without his absurd menace, without Sonya singing in the morning at the top of her lungs:

Oh, que s'est beau
De se baigner dans l'eau.

Without her mimicking everybody, from Aunt Adelaide to the cat—without the excitement of a walk with her in those moods when any phantasy might seize her—without her wilful, high-handed ways, he would be free again, his life once more out of pawn. A curious emptiness assailed him.

“When will you know for sure?” he asked.

“This afternoon. You can’t come—I wish you could.”

“I bet you, I feel just like parents do,” said Ambrose, “when they have a child that is going to leave them.” But in his heart he knew that parent did not cover all he felt.

She drew back and looked at him. “That ’ll mean I ’m going away, won’t it? But, just the same—I ’ve got it! Look, I ’ll dance this way.” It was the pure

beauty of dance, it interpreted nothing. It was clear rhythm, the pure beauty of gesture—the loveliness so complete and yet so fleeting that tears sprang to his eyes.

She stopped.

“Oh, Sonya,” Ambrose cried. “How lovely you are! You’re like a dancing flame—you’re like a tree bent in the wind. You were a little green bud when you came—now you’re a wonderful flower. Your heart was hard; now, it’s all soft and melting. Sonya, it seems to me that I can’t bear to have you go! You infuriate me, you exasperate me—but you were the magic gift to me—now were n’t you?”

For a moment she clung to him and looked at him with questioning eyes.

“Don’t you want me to go with Karovna?” she asked.

“Of course I don’t,” he said. “Of course, I want you to stay. Yet I know you must go.”

She threw herself in his arms crying:

"Ambrose! Ambrose! I don't want to leave you, Ambrose!"

The door opened and Mrs. Babcock came in. She had gone out marketing from the pushcarts on Bleeker Street, an occupation she adored.

For a second of brief comprehension her eyes traveled from Sonya to Ambrose. Then with deliberation she sat down in an armchair.

"Well," she said, "I've found her at last—Camilla, I mean!"

"Camilla!" cried Ambrose. "Where is she?"

Deliberately Mrs. Babcock searched in her purse. "This is where she's working." Her eyes sought Sonya's for the fraction of a second. "You see, I saw her on the street—one time not long ago—and she looked real shabby. She looked like *anybody*—the way she must have looked

before she came to New York! So I began to be worried. I 've always been worried about Camilla. It was n't *like* her to go away as she did. And I began to ask around until I found her address. She 's lost her good job, she says, and she 's making a little bit doing fashions. She 's boarding with friends in the country."

"Where?" cried Ambrose.

"She did n't say—I thought I 'd leave something for *you* to find out. I think she 'd be glad to see you."

"What do you suppose happened?" said Ambrose. "Why did she go away without a word?"

Sonya had not moved; she had not stirred. A little expression of contempt and then of indulgence crept across her face. Then quietly, without a tremor, she tore up their life together.

"She did n't leave without a word. She sent you a note to come and see her. *I tore it up!*"

Aunt Adelaide's mouth flew open. Ambrose sprang to his feet. So for a moment they stood confronting each other.

"Yes, I tore it up," Sonya repeated with calm. "'There's no use your looking like that, Ambrose. Say, 'You little beast!' and have done with it!'" She dominated them. There was in her pose something invulnerable.

"Why, Ambrose," said Mrs. Babcock. "Look at that! Do you see what's at the window? It's Yolande! Camilla must have come back." Slowly and with dignity the cat stalked in and hissed at Sonya.

But Ambrose had seized the mallet and was knocking on the wall. A little faint tap answered him.

Sonya stood looking after him. She was again intact—again the super-child. "I used to think he was too good for Camilla, but he's as"—she paused to find a blasting word—"as soft as she!"

CHAPTER XX

“OH, Camilla!” was all that he could say at first, “Camilla—tell me—have you come back? Are you happy? Are you married? Please tell me everything.”

“I ’m not anything—married or come back or happy,” she said. “I ’ve been staying at the Aikens’—they ’re old friends of my mother’s, and—Sasha ’s been boarding there, too—that ’s all there is to that.”

“Do you love him?” Ambrose asked.

“No,” she said. “No, I don’t. I thought I did—for awhile. Then I thought I ought to.”

“Then why, Camilla—why—”

Camilla told the whole story, then she asked:

“I could n’t hit him when he was down,

could I—after those pawn tickets—and where he was living—and the violets; when I saw him lying there so white, looking like a little boy—”

“Maternal instinct,” murmured Ambrose.

“Some one had to take care of him—and in the beginning I committed myself, I suppose. I got ready to tell him that if he cares for me he ’ll let me go—that I ’ve tried to love him—that at times I almost do. And then, he ’s so sweet and seems to care so much. It was a good joke on me, though, running away from you to escape my gray youth, and Sasha acting just as my father did when he was sick. But you understand, don’t you, Ambrose? You ’re just like that, too.”

He understood too well—that if you ’re a gentleman you can’t be a deserter to the obligations you ’ve enthusiastically undertaken.

"How did you happen to come back to-night?" Ambrose asked.

"Oh," said Camilla wearily, "it was one of Sasha's schemes. He's been hateful about the cat. There was n't anything else to be jealous of there. So I asked my tenants if I could get some of my things. I thought I'd put Yolande on the window-sill and he'd go back to you. I never dreamed of seeing you."

"See here, Camilla, you've done your duty and I've done mine. This is Askoff's own fault. He digged the pit and hath fallen into the pit which he hath digged. He's well now, is n't he?"

"Better."

"We'll go over together, and you'll tell him how you feel. You've paid your obligation—if you ever had any."

"Oh," cried Camilla, "it's an awful thing to do. You don't know how he feels about me, or how much he loves me. He'll

kill you, Ambrose—he often talks about wanting to!”

“Don’t worry,” said Ambrose dryly. “You ’re going with me and you ’re going to tell him how you feel. Come on, Camilla, darling!”

As they journeyed out to the Aikens’, Camilla’s fears as to the dark hour that awaited Sasha grew.

“He ’s always hoped to make me care more, you see,” she told Ambrose. “And then, sometimes, he thought it was my temperament, not to care for any one. I ’ve dreaded and hoped for the day when he ’d insist on leaving the Aikens’, and I ’d have to tell him. He ’s made me feel I owe him at least a chance to make me care. It ’s all come back to that—you can’t hit a person when they ’re down—when there ’s nobody else to take care of a person, you have to do it—when you ’re people like us, Ambrose.”

They arrived at the Aikens'.

"Sasha's gone in town and he's taken his things," Mrs. Aiken announced. "He left this note for you, Camilla."

Camilla read it, sat down weakly and handed it to Ambrose.

"Good-by, little Camilla," the note read. "In leaving you, I tear out my heart—but I must go. I've tried to make you understand me, but you will never understand the soul of an artist. No woman will. You've eaten my life up as you would a cake. You've looked at me with uncomprehending eyes. You've tortured me and smiled at my torment. But this is because you are a woman, vain and selfish, incapable of comprehension of the nobler things of existence—incapable of sacrifice. After our quarrel this morning, when you left in a fury, with your intolerable cat—whose presence has caused me so many hours of needless anguish—I felt I must wrench my-

self from you. I saw too clearly that you are the most sinister of all types of women—the woman whose eyes give the promise of what her heart can never realize, incapable of a generous gesture, penurious of her body, and spendthrift of the hearts of others.

“Goodby, Camilla, you’ve been my delight and my despair. I can’t blame you for being a woman. But I now know clearly and forever what I’ve always known—that the creative artist must shun women like you. For him, only the simple, unquestioning, peasant type, bountiful and giving. What perverse fate made me love you? I do not know. I know that tomorrow I shall be weeping for the sound of your voice; my ears, unruly, will be listening for the sound of your footsteps. But I must save my soul alive while yet there is time. For your sake and because of your absurd conventions I have stifled in this

bourgeois environment. But this morning, at last, I saw clearly, I saw which way my salvation lay. Again, goodbye. Sasha."

They had a moment's pause, then both of them laughed; they laughed until Mrs. Aiken heard them, and laughed with them. They laughed until tears rolled down their cheeks, and in the midst of their laughter Ambrose gasped out:

"At least there's nothing to keep us from getting married now."

At this Camilla became grave. "You'll have to square Sonya, you know. You'll have to do something about her. I've always thought she cared for you."

For a moment Ambrose's heart smote him. He remembered the emotional moment before his aunt's entrance; a thousand little memories of Sonya's devotion returned to him. He put them back with sternness.

"I've been too soft," he decided.

"This is the moment for us to be ruthless—even to Sonya."

They returned to New York rather silently, rather worn with the emotions of the day, instinctively conserving themselves for another battle.

"The least she 'll do, you know," Camilla warned Ambrose, "is to have one of her awful rages."

When they got back there was a commotion on the Square. Mardi Gras seemed to be in progress. The place was crowded with Villagers, and regular people, with Disapprovers and Aborigines. The Italian quarter had given up its hordes; the players from the various play-houses had given up rehearsal and were standing bareheaded on the Square. The Brevoort and Lafayette had yielded up their dead. The French nuns on the south of the Square craned out of the window.

Through the crowd Ambrose saw run-

ning toward him a little gray-haired old lady with a pink flower in her gray hat. It was his Aunt Adelaide.

"Thank God you 've come!" she cried.

"They 're trying to arrest Sonya."

"Arrest Sonya!" cried Ambrose.

"What for?"

"She 's got the prize—she 's sailing with Karovna, but in the meantime she 's stopping traffic. She 's giving a *fête champêtre* in the Square. She 's dressed in her dancing clothes—if you can call them clothes. Every one 's gone mad. They 're dancing, dancing with balloons—they 've gone swimming in the fountain! I don't know what 's gotten into them. It 's Sonya, I suppose. I tried to stop her but she told me she was registering joy. The nice park policeman who stands so much from her threatens to send in a riot call!"

"Look!" cried Camilla.

A hansom whirled by them; from its open

apron green balloons the size and shape of watermelons flew. Behind them sat Sonya. She detached one after another and threw them to the crowd. She saw Ambrose and Camilla, and with a great gesture threw all the rest to them, except a single rose-colored one. The driver whipped up his horse and Sonya vanished.

For a moment there was silence, then Mrs. Babcock remarked: "I am going back to Carthage tonight. There must be *some* inhibitions!"

"Come with us first to City Hall," said Ambrose. "Good little people like us are not safe left to our better natures alone in the Village. We need each other. Camilla—you need a husband, but I need a keeper. Not because we're bad, or to save us from sin, but to save us from life's blue serge lining."

THE END

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